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IVORY DOOR



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CHATTO & WINDUS

THE  
IVORY DOOR

*A LEGEND IN A PROLOGUE  
& THREE ACTS*

BY  
A.A. (A. A. Alexander) MILNE, 1882-1956

LONDON  
CHATTO & WINDUS

1929

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## PREFACE

It is always a convenience to have a writer labelled and card-indexed ; so that, with the knowledge in front of you that the author is a Realist, you can pull open the appropriate drawer and waste no time in searching for such words as " meticulous ", " sordid " or " precision ". The next author is Whimsical, and the " W " drawer tells you at once that his plays are *soufflés* ; " delicate ", if you wish to be polite, " thin ", if you don't ; " charming " or " nauseating ", as you happen to feel ; " tricky " and what not ; but, in any case " too finely spun out to be a full evening's entertainment ". For these are things you say of " a whimsical play " . . . but what " whimsical " means, I, of all people, have the least idea.

And, I suppose, I have the least chance of finding out. For I have the Whimsical label so firmly round my own neck that I can neither escape from it nor focus it. It seems to me now that if I write anything less realistic, less straightforward than " The cat sat on the mat ", I am " indulging in a whimsy ". Indeed if I did say that the cat sat on the mat (as well it might), I should be accused of being whimsical about cats ; not a real cat, but just a little make-believe pussy, such as the author of *Winnie-the-Pooh* invents so charmingly for our delectation.

Here, then, is a whimsical play—or so I was assured by the American critics when Mr. Charles Hopkins gave it its first production. There is a Child in the Prologue ; talk of a Magic Door and a Beautiful Princess. . . . Criticism could safely write itself. Even though the Door turns out not to be magic, the Princess not beautiful ; even though the child is obtruded on you for little longer than the child in *Macbeth* ; yet the name of the author tells you all that you want to know about the thing. Why should you trouble to read it ?

However, I hope that you will. For I think (if an author may make these confessions) that it is the best play which I have written ; even if it reminds me, not in the least of my favourite *Pooh*, but very much of an earlier play, not noticeably whimsical, *The Truth About Blayds*.

A. A. M.



## PERSONS OF THE PLAY

### PROLOGUE

KING HILARY  
PRINCE PERIVALE

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### THE PLAY

KING PERIVALE.  
BRAND (*his body-servant*).  
ANNA.  
THORA.  
THE CHANCELLOR.  
JESSICA.  
ANTON.  
OLD BEPPO.  
SIMEON.  
COUNT ROLLO.  
THE MUMMER.  
TITUS } (*Soldiers of the Guard*).  
CARLO }  
BRUNO (*Captain of the Guard*).  
PRINCESS LILIA.

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### A GLIMPSE INTO THE FUTURE

THE KING  
THE PRINCE

PROLOGUE. Within the King's Castle. Once upon a time.

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*(Fifteen years later)*

ACT I.

*Scene 1* : Within the King's Castle.

*Scene 2* : The same. Early next morning.

ACT II.

*Scene 1* : Without the King's Castle. A little more than two hours later.

*Scene 2* : In the Courtyard of the Castle.

ACT III. Within the King's Castle. A little less than two hours later . . . With just a glimpse into the future.

## PROLOGUE

*Once upon a time in the country of—but we need not give it a name. Nor need we say more of the time than that it was “once”, long, long ago. Somewhere in the Middle Ages, perhaps, when men were superstitious; but they are superstitious still. Somewhere in France, perhaps—or Germany—or in one of those mysterious countries where the King was little more than King of his Castle; so that when we have said “Once upon a time there was a King”, we have said all that we need to say.*

*We see the King, good KING HILARY, seated on his throne, a grave man of middle age. Does he wear his crown? One feels that he does: that they always did in those days. Crown or no crown, he is surely the King; just as surely as this is the Throne Room of his Palace. There are two ways into it—through curtains, one imagines—from the left for those of his people who are to have audience of him, from the right for those who are already within the royal apartments. But there is also a door, a real door this time, hidden at the moment by a tapestry, which leads to—well, we shall see. For it is of this door that we are to tell.*

*A SERVANT comes in.*

SERVANT. His Royal Highness Prince Perivale is with-out, and begs audience of Your Majesty.

HILARY (*his mind elsewhere*). Let him come.

*(The SERVANT withdraws and returns with the PRINCE.)*

SERVANT. His Royal Highness Prince Perivale !

[*He goes out.*]

(*We need not stop to describe PERIVALE. He was only a child at this time—eight or nine years old. We shall see more of him later.*)

PERIVALE. Hallo !

HILARY. Hallo ! (*There is a short silence.*)

PERIVALE. Will you pretend that you are King Hilary and I am Prince Perivale, and that I have just come into the Palace and seen you and said "Hallo !"

HILARY (*rousing himself*). But I *am* the King and you *are* the Prince, and you *have* just come in, so we don't need to pretend.

PERIVALE. Why ?

HILARY. Why, because it is true.

PERIVALE. But you can pretend if things are true.

HILARY. Well, I don't see why you should want to.

(*He smiles kindly at the little son whom he loves so well.*)

PERIVALE. You see, I'm pretending that it isn't true, so as I can pretend that it *is*, so as when I'm thinking what a pity it isn't *really*, then I can remember that it's only pretend that it isn't, and it really is.

HILARY. I see.

PERIVALE (*carelessly*). I think that's a nice way of pretending.

HILARY. It is rather.

PERIVALE. Why do you say "It is rather" ? It is very.

HILARY. It is very.

PERIVALE. Now I'm going to begin. . . . Hallo !

HILARY. Hallo ! (*Silence.*) That was as far as we got last time.

PERIVALE. I don't think I want to play this game any more.



HILARY. Oh !

PERIVALE. We will go on if you want to very much.

HILARY. Never mind. I can play by myself when you are in bed. Sit down and talk to me.

PERIVALE (*sitting down*). I like talking to you. You're an understanding sort of man.

HILARY. Am I ?

PERIVALE. Are ordinary fathers nice sort of people, or is it only when they are Kings like you ?

HILARY. There must be many fathers who are fond of their children.

PERIVALE. Fond isn't being understanding. . . . Do other little boys have to wait until their fathers tell them to sit down ?

HILARY. It depends.

PERIVALE. Even *fathers* can't sit down until *you* tell them to, can they ?

HILARY. No, my son.

PERIVALE. And nobody *really* can until *I* tell them to—except you, of course. Can they ?

HILARY. When you are grown up they will not be able to ; but while you are only a little boy——

PERIVALE. I shall be King when I'm grown up.

HILARY. When I am dead, you will.

PERIVALE. Oh ! . . . When *are* you going to be dead, Father ?

HILARY. I don't know, Perivale.

PERIVALE. What's it like being dead ?

HILARY. I don't know that either.

PERIVALE. Cold, I should think, shouldn't you ?

HILARY. I wonder.

PERIVALE. I thought you knew everything.

HILARY. Not even our wisest men know about death.

PERIVALE. But Kings *are* the wisest men, aren't they ?

HILARY. It is commonly said so.

PERIVALE. And the handsomest, and the best swordsmen, and the cleverest painters, and the greatest generals, and—and everything.

HILARY. It is as well that the people should think so.

PERIVALE. Shall *I* be when *I* grow up?

HILARY. So it will be said.

PERIVALE. But shan't I be?

HILARY. It is almost too much to expect of one man, Perivale.

PERIVALE. Even if he is the King?

HILARY. The more so if he be the King.

PERIVALE. But ought people to say so if it isn't true?

HILARY. You will find that people say many things which are not true; particularly about Kings.

PERIVALE. Why?

HILARY. Well . . . they do.

PERIVALE. But why?

HILARY. You will understand, my son, when you are a man, why these things have to be.

PERIVALE (*smiling*). You always say that when you don't want to answer. Do ordinary fathers say it too?

HILARY. I expect so.

PERIVALE. Will you promise not to say it again to-day?

HILARY. I can't promise, Perivale.

PERIVALE. Oh, *do*, Father!

HILARY. Well, well, what is it you want to ask me?

PERIVALE (*carelessly*). Nothing particular. Only I don't see how we can ever *really* talk if we keep coming to a stop like that.

HILARY. I like you to ask me questions. I will explain everything which I can, my dear, my very dear, son.

PERIVALE. Well, then, what I want to know is—Do

you have to love people *tremendously* before you marry them ?

HILARY. Yes, you should.

PERIVALE. Did you love my mother like that ?

HILARY. I loved her like that before she died.

PERIVALE. Anna said that you met Mother in the forest before you married her, and you both fell in love with each other, and she thought you were just a student and you thought she was just a peasant, and you loved each other tremendously, and then when the King had to marry the Queen, lo ! and behold ! they were the ones, and weren't they just surprised and happy, and it's true love which makes the world go on.

HILARY. Anna talks too much.

PERIVALE. Did it really happen like that, Father ?

HILARY. It is always said to happen like that, my son.

PERIVALE. It's a nice way of happening.

HILARY. That is why people like to think it does happen so.

PERIVALE. But doesn't it ?

HILARY. No, my son. It was arranged that I should marry your mother ; and, in accordance with the custom of the country, I met her for the first time on the day that I married her. It will be the same with you.

PERIVALE. Oh ! . . . Well, that makes it difficult, because I told Anna I was going to marry *her*.

HILARY (*smiling*). Well, well, we need not think about it yet. There is plenty of time.

PERIVALE (*nodding*). To-morrow would be quite soon enough, wouldn't it ? I'll think about it in bed, and tell you what I decide to-morrow.

HILARY. That will be best.

PERIVALE (*after a pause*). Oh, I knew there was

something I really did want to ask you. What does Bruno mean when he says, "By the Ivory Door and all the Little Devils, I'll stay here no longer" ?

(*The KING looks sharply at his son, and frowns.*)

HILARY. Who is Bruno ?

PERIVALE (*carelessly*). One of the soldiers.

HILARY. Does he say that ?

PERIVALE. Well, he did this morning. What *is* the Ivory Door, Father. (*Pointing*) Is it the little door behind the tapestry there ?

HILARY (*startled*). How did you know there was a door there ?

PERIVALE (*surprised*). Doesn't everybody know ?

HILARY (*muttering*). They talk too much.

PERIVALE (*confidently*). I've known all about it for *hundreds* of years !

HILARY. What do you know ?

PERIVALE (*not so confidently*). That—that you mustn't ask questions about it, and that nobody talks about it, and that perhaps when I'm older, and that—well, perhaps I don't know so *very* much about it. . . . What *is* it, Father ?

HILARY (*after a pause*). Well, better that *I* should tell you than that you should make up a frightening tale for yourself from the chatter of others.

PERIVALE. I like *you* telling me. (*He waits eagerly.*)

HILARY. Your great-grandfather, King Stephen, went through that door on a summer's afternoon, and was never seen again.

PERIVALE (*awed*). Where did he go to ?

HILARY. Nobody knows.

PERIVALE. But where does the door go to ?

HILARY. Nobody knows.

PERIVALE. Why don't they look ?

HILARY. It is said that even to look is death.



PERIVALE. Well, I should want to look just to see if it was.

HILARY. A friend of the King's did. He also was never seen again.

PERIVALE. Has the door always been there ?

HILARY. As long as we have any record.

PERIVALE (*scornfully*). And have only two people wanted to see what was behind it ?

HILARY. Alas, no. There are stories of many who have gone through it, and been seen no more. King Stephen was not the first.

PERIVALE. What happens to them ?

HILARY. No one can tell us, for no one has ever come back.

PERIVALE. I wonder what does happen.

HILARY. I used to wonder, Perivale.

PERIVALE (*surprised*). Don't you still ?

HILARY. What does it matter ? If the door is never opened, it might as well not be there.

PERIVALE. I expect there's a long dark passage, and then a very deep pit, and in you go—plop !—before you know where you are.

HILARY. It may be so.

PERIVALE. I expect there's a terrible monster just round the corner—waiting for you. Or devils and things.

HILARY. It may be.

PERIVALE. I expect you just vanish suddenly, because an old woman snatches you up into the air.

HILARY. All these things may be.

PERIVALE. Isn't it exciting ? . . . (*Thoughtfully*) Of course if you went through the door you might never come back, but you would know all about it just before you didn't come back. Wouldn't you ?

HILARY. You wouldn't be able to tell anybody.

PERIVALE. Of course telling is nice, but knowing is nice too.

HILARY. There are many who believe that they know, and there is none who can gainsay them.

PERIVALE (*going close to the door*). Who has the key, Father?

HILARY. The key had disappeared before I came to the throne. . . . Nobody knows where it is.

PERIVALE. If you found it, would you go through?

HILARY (*hesitating*). I— I— (*Suddenly*) I would destroy it.

PERIVALE. Perhaps King Stephen's friend took it with him through the door, and it vanished too.

HILARY. It may be.

PERIVALE. Were you alive, Father, when King Stephen was alive?

HILARY. As a very little boy, yes. I remember him.

PERIVALE. Supposing he had taken you with him, then I should never have been born, should I?

HILARY. No, my son.

PERIVALE. What does it feel like, not being born?

HILARY. I don't know, Perivale.

PERIVALE. Funny, I should think, shouldn't you? (*He goes right up to the door.*) Father!

HILARY. Yes?

PERIVALE. May I just look at it? (*The KING hesitates. Then he decides to make light of the matter.*)

HILARY (*cheerfully*). Why not? (*He throws back the tapestry, disclosing the door.*) Just an ordinary door, you see. (*He laughs a little self-consciously*) Nothing frightening about it. (*PERIVALE sits cross-legged on the floor in front of it, pondering it.*) Nothing to be afraid of, my son, nothing to be afraid of.

PERIVALE (*looking up at his Father in sudden surprise*). I wasn't being afraid of it, Father. (*He continues to gaze at it.*) I'm waiting for it to tell me.

## ACT I

### SCENE 1

*The scene is the same, but it is fifteen years later. PERIVALE is King now; the bravest of the brave, the wisest of the wise, and so on. They have been saying it since he came to the throne. If he had not such an ironic sense of humour, he might believe it, for he is a sufficiently decorative-looking King to inspire his people to flattery. But he has a passion for the truth: the truth about himself, which he knows, and the truth about many other matters, of which only he knows that he is ignorant. When we last saw him, he was waiting to know the secret of the Ivory Door. He is still waiting, still wondering. In fact, it is almost within his grasp now, for he has stumbled upon the key to it. As we watch him, we see that he is trying to make up his mind. He walks up and down glancing always at the door. He takes the key from his pocket, makes to put it in the lock, withdraws and wonders. "Of course you might never come back, but you would know all about it before you didn't come back"—it was fifteen years ago that he said it, and never since then has that thought been long out of his mind. To know! Wouldn't it be worth anything to know?*

*The Throne Room is as we saw it fifteen years ago, save in this one particular: the tapestry has gone, and we see the Ivory Door. Since it is there, why hide it? PERIVALE claps his hands, and from an inner apartment*

*comes* BRAND, *his body-servant, lean, dark, efficient, faithful to the idea of efficiency, and by reason of his personal sympathy with PERIVALE'S ironic humour, rather than from the lofty motives of loyalty and duty such as he would instinctively advance.*

BRAND. Your Majesty !

PERIVALE (*after a pause*). I have been King for three years, Brand, and I never get tired of seeing you come in like that.

BRAND. I never get tired of coming in, Your Majesty.

PERIVALE. Excellent ! We will humour each other.

(*He waves a hand of dismissal. BRAND goes out.*

PERIVALE *claps his hands again. BRAND comes in.*)

BRAND. Your Majesty !

PERIVALE (*throwing out his hands*). There you are !

BRAND. Did Your Majesty wish anything ?

PERIVALE. A thousand things. . . . But I don't know what they are.

BRAND. Has Your Majesty any commands for me ?

PERIVALE. No commands. (*Kindly*) A few requests, perhaps.

BRAND (*nobly*). I would die for Your Majesty !

PERIVALE. That was not to be one of them.

BRAND. I am at Your Majesty's service.

PERIVALE. I wonder . . . Would you go through that door if I asked you ? (*He nods towards the Ivory Door.*)

BRAND (*after an anxious glance to make sure that the key is not there*). Yes, Your Majesty, if only it was possible. But there is no key.

PERIVALE. Supposing I were to tell you that I had found the key ?

BRAND. Then I would beseech Your Majesty to cast it into the deepest corner of the moat.



PERIVALE. And after I had done that?

BRAND. I should again declare my readiness to go through the door—if only it were possible.

PERIVALE (*shaking his head with a smile*). Your heroism would not deceive me, Brand.

BRAND. It would not be meant to, Your Majesty. It would only be meant to re-assure myself. . . . Any other command, Your Majesty?

PERIVALE (*thoughtfully*). Tell me, are you really afraid of what is beyond there?

BRAND. One is not afraid of burnt fingers, Your Majesty, but one does not hold one's hand in the flame.

PERIVALE. Death seems to you as certain as that—behind the door?

BRAND (*with a shrug*). We know what has happened to the others.

PERIVALE. We *don't* know what has happened to the others.

BRAND. It is the same thing, Your Majesty.

PERIVALE (*after a pause*). Supposing *I* were to go through, what would you do?

BRAND. Give the alarm, Your Majesty.

PERIVALE. And then?

BRAND. Attach myself to Your Majesty's eldest son.

PERIVALE (*surprised*). My eldest son?

BRAND. Your Majesty is to wed with the Princess Lilia to-morrow.

PERIVALE. Yes, but— but—— Yes.

BRAND. One has to look ahead, Your Majesty.

PERIVALE. True. (*He walks up and down thoughtfully, and stops at the door again.*) Yet I want to *know*. How can I not *know*?

BRAND. We shall know all about death when our time comes, Your Majesty.

PERIVALE. How do we know it is death? It may be the way into another world.

BRAND. Your Majesty is a King in this one. Would you be better off in another?

PERIVALE (*waving BRAND to the door*). You are a servant in this world—could you be worse off in another?

BRAND. I might not be servant to so noble a master.

PERIVALE (*with an ironic smile*). Thank you, Brand. You have re-assured yourself again.

BRAND. I mean it with all my heart, Your Majesty.

PERIVALE. You are a good fellow. . . . And so you will look after my eldest son for me?

BRAND. As I have looked after Your Majesty.

PERIVALE. We must give him a name. What shall we call him? Perhaps you have already decided?

BRAND (*shocked*). Your Majesty! (*With dignity*) That will be for Your Majesty and the Princess Lilia to decide.

PERIVALE. Ah, I was forgetting the Princess Lilia. She will be there too, of course.

A VOICE OUTSIDE (*archly*). May I come in?

BRAND. (*scandalised*). Your Majesty!

(*He goes quickly towards it, but ANNA'S head has already appeared through the curtains. This is that ANNA whom PERIVALE was prepared to marry fifteen years ago; a broad-bodied, loose-minded, irresponsible woman then, who has spread steadily in all these directions with each succeeding year.*)

PERIVALE. You may come in, Anna.

ANNA (*waving BRAND on one side with great dignity*). Of course I may come in. It would be a pretty thing if Old Anna were not allowed to see her boy of a morning. (*Looking at BRAND*) Who is this young man? I don't think I know this young man. Young man, you may leave us.

BRAND. Now, now, Old Anna!

ANNA. Don't you now-now me ! Who are you to say now-now to me ?

PERIVALE (*smiling*). You may leave us, Brand.

BRAND (*reluctantly*). Your Majesty— She is—— (*He touches his head.*) She knows not how to behave.

ANNA (*indignantly*). Behave ! I not know ! Why it was I who first taught His Majesty how to behave ! (*With a wink*) Aha, I have seen more of His Majesty than you, let me tell you.

PERIVALE (*firmlly*). If you will leave us, Brand, I will see that we both behave.

BRAND. Your Majesty !

[*He withdraws.*]

ANNA (*going up to PERIVALE and stroking him soothingly*). There, there, my darling ! It was lucky I came in when I did, and stopped him being rude to you. You want your Old Anna to look after you.

PERIVALE. I want my Old Anna to help me look after somebody else.

ANNA (*nodding*). Your sweetheart, yes.

PERIVALE (*surprised*). My sweetheart ?

ANNA. Your Lilia.

PERIVALE. Oh ! . . . Yes.

ANNA. Bless you, you don't think Old Anna wouldn't know.

PERIVALE. I assure you I have no idea what Old Anna knows.

ANNA (*knowingly*). Old Anna always knows when there's love in the air.

PERIVALE. I don't understand this talk about love.

ANNA (*chuckling*). I am sure you don't, Your Majesty.

PERIVALE. Surely you know that the Princess Lilia and I meet for the first time to-morrow ?

ANNA (*chuckling*). Oh, I know ! I know ! The first time ! Beautiful ! Beautiful !

PERIVALE (*patiently, but firmly*). In accordance with the custom of the country, the King's Bride——

ANNA (*chuckling*). The custom of the country! Oh, yes, I know all about the custom of the country! And what harm if they do, I say.

PERIVALE (*shaking his head at her*). Anna!

ANNA. Oh, I mean no more than kisses, Your Majesty. Let them wait for more than kisses. The wedding-night soon comes.

PERIVALE (*firmly*). Have you chosen me the maid for Her Royal Highness?

ANNA. Yes, Your Majesty, I have her here. Thora. A good girl.

PERIVALE. Send her to me. I will see her.

ANNA. Yes, Your Majesty. (*Going to the curtains*) Are you there, dear? (*She goes out and comes back with THORA, a pretty girl of eighteen, a little overwhelmed by the sudden glory which has come to her.*) You weren't listening, I hope? Naturally when His Majesty and I get talking together——

PERIVALE. Thank you, Anna.

ANNA (*pushing THORA forward*). You needn't be afraid of His Majesty, dear. He's a kind man, as I ought to know, having taught him kindness with a slipper. (*PERIVALE claps his hands.*) Yes, yes, I'm going, dear. (*She makes her way out as BRAND approaches.*) There's that young man again. Who is that young man? I've seen him somewhere. Why don't they push him through the Ivory Door and have done with it?

[*She goes out, still talking, BRAND hurrying her off from behind.*]

PERIVALE (*to THORA*). So you are to be maid to her Royal Highness?

THORA. If it please Your Majesty.

PERIVALE. You will be kind to her?



THORA. Oh, Your Majesty !

PERIVALE. No, but I mean it. She comes to us a stranger. She comes from her own country to make a home among strangers in a new country. She may bring none of her own people with her beyond the Palace gates. From the moment that she crosses them she is alone with us, a stranger. You will be kind to her ?

THORA. Your Majesty, she is to be the Queen !

PERIVALE. All the more reason that she should have a friend in you, Thora.

THORA. She will have Your Majesty.

PERIVALE. True. We must not forget that.

THORA (*smiling*). Well, there is one old friend for her.

PERIVALE. An *old* friend ?

THORA (*archly*). Oh, Your Majesty, we all know !

PERIVALE. What do you know ? Everybody seems to know things, save myself.

THORA. We know that Your Majesty and Her Royal Highness have been friends, more than friends, these many months.

PERIVALE. Ah yes, I was forgetting that you knew that.

THORA. Oh, Your Majesty, the people always know !

PERIVALE (*drily*). It appears so. (*Smiling*) Let me see what they do know. They know that the Princess and I met one day—in the forest ?

THORA. Yes, Your Majesty. Accidentally.

PERIVALE. Accidentally. That as soon as we saw each other we were attracted by each other.

THORA. Oh, very much attracted, Your Majesty.

PERIVALE. Very much attracted. That I supposed her to be a simple peasant——

THORA. Yes, Your Majesty.

PERIVALE. Now I wonder why I supposed that ?

THORA (*eagerly*). For the reason that she was wearing the dress of a simple peasant.

PERIVALE. That, of course, would account for the mistake. She wore it, I suppose——

THORA. To have more freedom, Your Majesty.

PERIVALE (*nodding*). More freedom.

THORA. Adventures come to the peasant such as never come to the Princess.

PERIVALE. No doubt. Well, then, I was attracted by this simple peasant——

THORA. You had never seen anyone so lovely before !

PERIVALE. Never. In her simple peasant costume she looked particularly beautiful. I was attracted by her, I fell in love with her, and at last I decided to marry her.

THORA (*eagerly*). You feared that you could not.

PERIVALE. I feared that I could not, for that I was a King and she was but a simple peasant.

THORA (*clasping her hands*). Oh, how unhappy you were, Your Majesty !

PERIVALE. Miserable. I can hardly bear to think of it even now. . . . Ah, but she loved *me*, Thora !

THORA (*eagerly*). Yes ! Oh, yes ! She thought you were the most wonderful man she had ever seen !

PERIVALE. Oh, much the most wonderful ! But alas ! she feared that she could not marry me, for that she was a Princess, and I, as she supposed, was only a—— Now, what was I ?

THORA. A simple huntsman.

PERIVALE (*surprised*). Huntsman ? You're sure it was not a student ? (*He sketches a studious pose.*) Walking through the forest in strict meditation.

THORA (*smiling*). No, Your Majesty. You see, I *do* know. It was a huntsman, wasn't it ?

PERIVALE. I shall have to admit that it was, Thora.

THORA (*nodding eagerly*). You were separated from the hunt ; you had fallen ; you had struggled through mire and ditch and brake. How could she guess that you were the King ?

PERIVALE. How indeed ? Yet she fell in love with me.

THORA. Ah, Your Majesty, that is true love ! Oh, and think how wonderful for both of you when for the first time you realised the truth !

PERIVALE (*surprised*). The truth ? Does *that* come into the story ?

THORA (*not heeding*). When you realised that the simple peasant whom you loved was the Princess Lilia whom you were pledged to marry ; when she knew that the King whose bride she was to be was already her lover. Ah !

PERIVALE (*with a sigh, but not now ironical*). Yes, that would have been—(*he corrects himself*) that was a great moment. I remember it still.

THORA (*simply*). You will remember it all your life, Your Majesty.

PERIVALE. You are right, Thora. There should be a moment in the lives of each one of us which we may remember for ever. . . . You love, Thora ?

THORA (*shyly*). Yes, Your Majesty.

PERIVALE. And are loved in return ?

THORA. Yes, Your Majesty.

PERIVALE. Then you will be very kind to the Princess Lilia.

THORA (*simply*). I will be her friend if she will let me.

PERIVALE. Thank you.

(*He holds out his hand. She drops on her knees and kisses it.*)

THORA (*a little overcome*). Oh, Your Majesty !

C

PERIVALE (*abstractedly dismissing her*). There's a good girl.

[*She goes out, BRAND in attendance.*

BRAND. His Excellency the Chancellor craves audience, Your Majesty.

PERIVALE (*pondering the door*). I will receive him.

(BRAND *returns with the* CHANCELLOR.)

BRAND. His Excellency the Chancellor.

[*He goes out, leaving the* CHANCELLOR—*an elderly, cautious gentleman, to whom all life is something of a political crisis—awaiting His Majesty's pleasure.*

PERIVALE (*still looking at the door*). And what does His Excellency think?

CHANCELLOR. On what point, Your Majesty?

PERIVALE. Let us say the mysterious disappearance of King Stephen.

CHANCELLOR (*shocked*). Your Majesty!

PERIVALE (*looking up*). What is it?

CHANCELLOR (*reprovingly*). It is hardly—— That is to say—— Naturally Your Majesty can do no wrong——

PERIVALE. Assume for the moment that he has shocked his Chancellor's feelings. Well? How?

CHANCELLOR (*looking hastily at the door and away again*). It is wiser—it is safer, Your Majesty—to avert the eye—and the mind—from the—the unknown. I find it so. I find it safer.

PERIVALE. Turn the mind on it, and it may no longer be unknown.

CHANCELLOR. So thought your ever-to-be-revered great-grandfather, King Stephen the Tenth of blessed but unhappy memory.

PERIVALE (*kindly*). Call him Stephen for the moment. I shall understand.

CHANCELLOR (*with dignity*). What did the death of the

ever-to-be-revered King Stephen profit us? Do we know now? We do not. If we are not meant to know, Your Majesty, it is the part of a wise man not to enquire. I find it so. I find it safer.

PERIVALE. Yet you must wonder sometimes.

CHANCELLOR. I have little time for wondering.

PERIVALE. I have little time for doing anything else.

CHANCELLOR (*after a preparatory cough*). It has occurred to me sometimes, Your Majesty, that I am a man in advance of my time. The thought has occurred to me. I have a philosophy in this matter. The evil spirits who lurk behind the door——

PERIVALE. But that is it. Do they?

CHANCELLOR. Undoubtedly, Your Majesty. They lurk. But I have this feeling about them. That the less we think about them, the less power they have over us. The less we fear them, the less—the less they frighten us. But, as I say, I am in advance of my time. I do not expect to be followed—save, of course, by Your Majesty, the wisest of the wise.

PERIVALE. I follow you, my dear Chancellor, and I assure you that I am *not* frightened by your lurking devils.

CHANCELLOR. Your Majesty frightened! The bravest of the brave! Could I have said it! But may I humbly represent to Your Majesty that in my philosophy, to—er—defy these evil spirits is of a piece with fearing them. I have this feeling: the less we defy them, the less they resent our defiance. To ignore them, that it the only true philosophy. I find it so. I find it safest.

PERIVALE (*looking at him with a smile*). You have a curious way of ignoring them. Well, well! And now, what is it, Your Excellency?

CHANCELLOR. Your Majesty, Her Royal Highness the Princess Lilia's Messenger, Count Rollo, is arrived and craves audience.



PERIVALE. I will see him.

CHANCELLOR (*hesitatingly*). Your Majesty——

PERIVALE. Well?

CHANCELLOR. If I have Your Majesty's permission to put my thoughts into words?

PERIVALE. Into a limited number of words.

CHANCELLOR. There is a certain ceremony in these matters. In presenting to Your Majesty Her Royal Highness' marriage-gift, the young Count Rollo will assuredly desire to make a speech.

PERIVALE. I will assuredly listen to it.

CHANCELLOR. It is most gracious of Your Majesty. (*He hesitates*) H'r'm'——

PERIVALE. Well?

CHANCELLOR. Your Majesty, without doubt the speech, as prepared by the young Count Rollo, will fall into periods, such as are most naturally ended by bursts of applause or laughter.

PERIVALE. I will applaud—and laugh.

CHANCELLOR. Your Majesty is ever generous. My only thought was that, if the ceremony were public, one could arrange for the applause and laughter without taxing Your Majesty's generosity. It has often been done. It is found safer. Believe me, Your Majesty, the people are readily moved to enthusiasm over anything which concerns Your Majesty.

PERIVALE. How kind of them. Let them attend, such as wish it.

CHANCELLOR. Your Majesty, they will esteem the privilege beyond all words of mine. Your Majesty's forthcoming marriage has appealed in an unprecedented way to the imagination of the people. (*Slyly*) The—romance of it, if I may say so unofficially, Your Majesty.

PERIVALE (*ironically*). My dear Chancellor, it is indeed a romance. I meet her for the first time to-morrow.

CHANCELLOR (*with a nod*). Officially, Your Majesty. But, if I may so unofficially—— (*He hums roguishly.*)

PERIVALE. So it seems.

CHANCELLOR (*enthusiastically*). An alliance between the most beautiful lady (as I am assured, and as Your Majesty needs no telling)—the most beautiful lady in the world, and the wisest philosopher, the most brilliant swordsman and the most gifted and endowed monarch of the time.

PERIVALE. It becomes more romantic every minute.

CHANCELLOR. Then I have Your Majesty's permission to proceed with the matter?

PERIVALE. As you will.

CHANCELLOR (*retiring*). Thank you, Your Majesty.

PERIVALE (*as the CHANCELLOR is vanishing*). Your Excellency!

CHANCELLOR (*hastily appearing again*). Your Majesty?

PERIVALE (*thoughtfully*). What did happen to King Stephen?

CHANCELLOR (*shocked*). No, no, Your Majesty! Let us ignore! Let us ignore! I implore Your Majesty!

(*PERIVALE laughs and gives him a nod of dismissal, and the CHANCELLOR goes out. PERIVALE claps his hands and BRAND comes in.*)

BRAND. Your Majesty!

PERIVALE. Am I well dressed enough to receive a gentleman who is to make a long speech?

BRAND. No, Your Majesty.

PERIVALE (*with a sigh*). I was afraid not. Well, let us see what we can do. (*BRAND draws back the curtain leading to the private part of the Palace. As he moves to it, PERIVALE says*) I am the greatest philosopher and the most brilliant swordsman in the country. Did you know that, Brand?

BRAND (*surprised*). But all the country knows that, Your Majesty.

PERIVALE (*nodding*). They all know things—save me. I am the only ignorant man.

(*He goes out. BRAND shrugs his shoulders and follows him.*)

(*The sightseers drift in, a mixed crowd. ANTON is a very superior young man, albeit that he is condescending to marry JESSICA, a young woman of inferior manners and intelligence. ANTON is always a step or two ahead of her, pretending that she belongs to somebody else: she is always hurrying after him: thus they go through life. Old BEPPO makes no claim on our attention, nor wishes to, save by reason of his age; he might have been dead and is not. SIMEON is a man of ideas. In any company he would say something, and tell his wife afterwards what he said.*)

JESSICA. Anton! Anton! Is that the Ivory Door?

ANTON. The Ivory Door? Oh, yes, yes, that will be it, no doubt.

SOME OF THE OTHERS (*to each other*). That's the Ivory Door!

JESSICA. Grandfather used to tell us about it when we were children. He was alive when the King went through it!

THE OTHERS. Her grandfather went through it!

ANTON. Stephen? Yes, yes, your grandfather would have been alive then.

JESSICA. Grandfather said that the Devil was waiting for King Stephen and changed him into a Black Leopard. He waits behind the door, Grandfather said, and changes anybody who goes through into a Black Leopard.

ANTON. A Black Leopard, yes. That's what happens to anybody who goes through the Ivory Door.

JESSICA (*to the others*). My grandfather used to tell me. You see he was alive when King Stephen was alive. That's how he knew.

BEPP0 (*pushing his way forward*). Who was alive when King Stephen was alive? Show him to Old Beppo, and let him say it to Old Beppo's face.

THE OTHERS. Her grandfather was.

ANTON (*condescendingly*). The child's grandfather.

BEPP0. Her grandfather. Well, show me her grandfather, if he *is* her grandfather.

JESSICA. Oh, but he's dead now.

BEPP0. What did I tell you? He knew he couldn't look me in the face and say he was alive. Why? Because *I'm* the only man in the country who *was* alive and *is* alive.

SIMEON (*eagerly*). Then *you* can remember when the Devil changed the King into a Black Leopard?

BEPP0. Who says he was changed into a Black Leopard?

ANTON. An idle story of the girl's grandfather.

BEPP0. Show me her grandfather. Let him say it to my face.

SIMEON. Isn't it true?

ALL. What did happen? What did happen?

BEPP0. What did happen? Ah! The story went about that he was carried off by the Devil on his Black Horse; and some say that on still moonless nights you can hear them going Home together, *cloppity, cloppity, cloppity*,—both going Home together, *cloppity, cloppity, cloppity*—him and the Devil riding Home together on his great Black Horse. . . . (*In a whisper*) *Cloppity—cloppity—cloppity. . . .*

(*There are shudders in his audience.*)

ANTON (*carelessly*). Yes, I heard that.

BEPP0 (*firmly*). You heard it, but it isn't true.

ANTON (*unmoved*). So I always understood.

BEPP0. How do I know? Because I was alive and these things were revealed unto me. Stephen fell into the Bottomless Pit, same as all the others did, same as they always will, if they go a-venturing through the Ivory Door.

ANTON (*to the others*). That was how it was. The Bottomless Pit.

JESSICA (*stubbornly*). Well, my grandfather said——

THE OTHERS (*laughing*). Her grandfather!

JESSICA (*whimpering to herself as she returns to the back of the crowd*). My grandfather said — (*sniff*) — Black Leopard — (*sniff*) — I always thought — (*sniff*) — Black Leopard — (*sniff*) — Black Leopard —— (*She dissolves into tears.*)

SIMEON. Now tell me, Old Beppo; if common folk like you or me went through that door—would the Devil trouble about common folk like you or me? Or is it only the great and glorious he lies in wait for?

BEPP0 (*testily*). Didn't I tell you there was a Bottomless Pit a-waiting for all?

ANTON. Precisely.

SIMEON. I just asked the question. (*Sticking to it*) Well, now, someone from afar, the Princess Lilia, as it might be, would the Devil's works have power over *her*, coming from afar? Might it not be that his power, being as you would say——

ANTON. Local. Exactly. Local. It may be, it may be.

BEPP0 (*surveying ANTON contemptuously*). If this old, old grandfather man I see before me were alive when King Stephen was alive, let *him* tell you. I know nothing. I'm only a baby.

SIMEON. Come, come, nothing was meant——



BEPP0 (*in weak anger*). Let him say it to my face. Let him say it man to man. Let him——

ALL. H'sh !

(*The CHANCELLOR comes in, commanding silence with a gesture. A Servant or two takes up position. Then comes PERIVALE, kingly dressed, BRAND in attendance, and we all prostrate ourselves. PERIVALE, with a kindly nod to us, seats himself on the throne.*)

PERIVALE (*to the CHANCELLOR*). We will receive Count Rollo.

CHANCELLOR. Your Majesty !

(*He makes a sign, and COUNT ROLLO is ushered in, followed by two attendants carrying a picture wrapped up in an embroidered cloth. We see at once that ROLLO is delighted with himself and his clothes. The only thing he is not quite sure of is his speech. However, Beauty is often inarticulate.*)

CHANCELLOR. Count Rollo !

PERIVALE (*holding out his hand*). I am well pleased to see you, Count.

ROLLO (*kissing it*). Your Majesty is most gracious.

(*But you feel that it is really ROLLO who is being gracious.*)

PERIVALE. You come from the Princess Lilia ?

ROLLO. Charged with her duty to Your Majesty, and a humble gift for Your Majesty's acceptance.

PERIVALE. It is a gift which I shall treasure.

ROLLO. Your Majesty—(*he clears his throat*)—this privilege which has fallen upon me—this privilege—I am privileged—Your Majesty, I am deeply sensible of the privilege—coming as I do, as I am privileged to do, on behalf of that noble lady, Her Royal Highness the Princess Lilia—(*Loud cheers from all, during which the*

COUNT *glances at his notes, and ends his period*)—Her Royal Highness the Princess Lilia. (*A few cheers, led by the CHANCELLOR.*) She, as yet, is a stranger to Your Majesty's people; the fame of Your Majesty, on the other hand, is known not only to his own people, but to the peoples of all the world. (*Loud cheers.*) As statesman (*cheers*), as orator (*cheers*), as general (*cheers*), as swordsman (*cheers*), as philosopher and poet (*cheers*), Your Majesty is—not only to his own people, but to the peoples of all the world—(*his voice goes up, as if he hoped for much more from the sentence, but finding nothing, he takes his voice down and finishes it*)—to the peoples of all the world (*cheers*). Your Majesty, I am charged with the proud duty of presenting to Your Majesty from the Princess Lilia a gift which, if I may venture to say so, will of all gifts be most acceptable to Your Majesty—a presentment, a portrait by the hand of our Court Painter——

CHANCELLOR (*with admiration*). Ah!

ROLLO. A portrait of Her Royal Highness herself.

CHANCELLOR. A beautiful thought!

ROLLO. Your Majesty is himself a painter—(PERIVALE's *eyebrows go up, and the people cheer*)—and, as such, will be able to judge of the skill of the artist, no less than, as a man, of the beauty of the woman. Your Majesty, I have the honour, on behalf of my mistress the Princess Lilia, to present this humble gift to Your Majesty.

(*He withdraws a pace. The picture is displayed, and the court expresses its admiration of LILIA's cold beauty.*)

PERIVALE. Count Rollo, I thank you heartily for the courteous way in which you have discharged your duty. You are right in supposing that I could desire no more gracious gift. My gratitude to the lady, your mistress, who has sent it, I will render to-morrow.

(*He holds out his hand to the COUNT, who kisses it.*)

ROLLO. At your service, Your Majesty.

PERIVALE (*to the CHANCELLOR*). Your Excellency will charge himself with the entertainment of this gentleman for as long as he cares to remain our guest.

CHANCELLOR (*awkwardly*). In accordance with custom, Your Majesty——

PERIVALE. I was forgetting. (*To ROLLO*) You return at once ?

ROLLO. With Your Majesty's permission.

PERIVALE. Good fortune attend you ! . . . Brand !

ROLLO. And Your Majesties !

(*He bows and goes out. BRAND takes the picture from his attendants and they follow him. The CHANCELLOR dismisses the people, who wander out after the COUNT. The CHANCELLOR turns, bows to the KING, and follows them.*)

PERIVALE. Put it there, Brand, and leave me.

(*BRAND places the picture on a chair and goes out.*)

PERIVALE (*turning to the picture*). We meet at last. (*He leans forward, and studies it closely.*) Cold, proud, beautiful. How would you have looked in peasant dress? Still cold, still proud, still beautiful. (*He looks at the Ivory Door and shrugs his shoulders.*) You will not grieve for me.

## ACT I

### SCENE 2

*It is early next morning. The Throne Room is in darkness, the curtains still drawn. From an inner room BRAND comes, carrying a lantern. PERIVALE follows him.*

PERIVALE. Pull the curtains, Brand. (BRAND *draws them back, and the early morning sunlight streams into the room.*) Morning. My last—or my first?

BRAND (*putting down the lantern and coming to him*). Your Majesty! Don't!

PERIVALE. Ah, but I must.

BRAND. Your Majesty may not believe——

PERIVALE. I believe nothing.

BRAND. You may scoff at the tales you hear—sorceries, enchantments, devils——

PERIVALE. I scoff at nothing.

BRAND. Then, Your Majesty——

PERIVALE. I am just an ignorant man. I want to know.

BRAND (*boldly*). An inquisitive man.

PERIVALE. On this point, yes. That door has been with me too long, Brand. It was in my dreams as a child, night and day. I have imagined terrible things of it, I have imagined beautiful things. Now I shall know whether it is terrible, or beautiful, or—nothing.

BRAND. The others never came back.

PERIVALE. Now I shall know why.

BRAND (*urgently*). Your Majesty, Your Majesty, the door may lead here or there, all that they tell of it may be folly—but this we do know, this is not folly. The others never came back.

PERIVALE (*with a smile*). Then I shall never come back. (*Whimsically to himself*) I wonder why.

BRAND (*regarding him steadily*). Your Majesty is a brave man.

PERIVALE (*ironically*). The bravest of the brave!—how often has it been recited. In truth, I am only a little obstinate. To be frank, Brand, that door offends me. When I come back, if I come back, we will all walk through it in a company, singing songs of derision.

BRAND (*muttering*). It is not a subject for jest.

PERIVALE. Not yet. But it may be. . . . Give me the lantern. (*He takes the key from his pocket.*)

BRAND. To-day of all days! Your marriage-day!

PERIVALE. The last day on which I am responsible only to myself. To-day I am Perivale—To-morrow I shall be—(*he shrugs his shoulders*)—somebody's husband.

BRAND. To-day you are King Perivale.

PERIVALE. But there is always a King. I leave no eldest son for you, Brand, but there is a cousin . . . and you can give the alarm.

BRAND (*pulling himself together bravely*). I—I will come with Your Majesty.

PERIVALE. No, no. The Princess Lilia may need you. You must think of some story—that I did it for her sake—I know not how, but for her sake—it was her life or mine—a story that will go well to music, that mothers can sing to their children.

BRAND (*dully*). I do not understand, Your Majesty.

PERIVALE. There is no need to. (*Taking the lantern*) Give me—how long shall we say—three hours. Until then I am in bed. If in three hours from now I do not

know everything, I shall never know . . . and you can give the alarm.

BRAND (*catching hold of the KING in a last effort to stop him*). Your Majesty !

PERIVALE (*violently pushing him away*). You fool ! I must have the truth ! May a King never have the truth ? (*Gently*) Put out your hand. (BRAND *holds his hand out wonderingly*.) Farewell. (*He kisses BRAND's hand formally. Then with a smile he says*) That, at least, is as true as the other way round. (*Briskly*) Now, Brand, I must be alone. (*He puts the key to the lock.*) Else some of your devils may be popping out at you.

BRAND (*shiveringly*). Farewell, Your Majesty.

(PERIVALE *watches him as he disappears through the curtains. Then he unlocks the door, and puts the key back in his pocket. The door swings slowly open. Involuntarily he starts back ; then, getting control of himself, walks firmly through. The door swings slowly after him—then, with a clang, shuts itself. BRAND, his head through the curtains, is watching, terrified.*)



## ACT II

### SCENE 1

*Beneath the outer walls of the Castle. It is two hours since we last saw PERIVALE, and in that time he has discovered the secret of the Ivory Door. Now he comes back to us ; dusty, torn and dishevelled from much stumbling along a dark and narrow passage, but safe in the sunlight again. He puts down the lantern.*

PERIVALE. So that was all ! Another legend. . . .  
We talk the truth out of everything.

*(He sits down on the bank beneath the wall. From the opposite side the MUMMER comes into the scene. We hear him first, carolling blithely to himself ; not because he is particularly happy, but because for the moment—early in the morning of a summer's day—he sees himself as a care-free vagabond, enjoying the early summer morning. But he will play any part you like, and, at fifty or so, he has had a good deal of experience.)*

MUMMER. Ha ! Company !

PERIVALE. Do you object to company ?

MUMMER. On the contrary, friend, I welcome company. I expand to company. Such is my nature.

PERIVALE. You are welcome to expand in *my* company, if you wish it.

MUMMER *(sitting down)*. I accept your invitation, friend. . . . I am for the Castle.

PERIVALE. I wish you joy of it.

MUMMER. And you ?

PERIVALE. Presently.

*(There is silence, while the MUMMER unpacks his breakfast.)*

MUMMER *(looking up at PERIVALE)*. You are thoughtful. You have come from far ?

PERIVALE. A long and dusty way, with disillusion at the end of it. I meditate on Disillusion.

MUMMER. Fortunately life gives us many opportunities of so meditating. But one always comes back to realities. Food is the great reality. You will share my breakfast ?

PERIVALE. Thankfully. *(He accepts his share.)* For fifteen years I have dreamed, I have wondered, I have imagined. To-day I have discovered the truth.

MUMMER *(passing the bottle)*. Then is the moment to drink.

PERIVALE *(taking it)*. I thank you. *(He drinks.)*

MUMMER. And the truth is—— ?

PERIVALE. Nothing.

MUMMER. Neither good nor bad ?

PERIVALE. Neither good nor bad. Just nothing.

MUMMER *(recovering the bottle)*. Your need is not so great as I had feared. One must welcome the good—thus. *(He drinks.)* One must console oneself for the bad—thus. *(He drinks.)* But if it be neither good nor bad, one drinks but for the sake of drinking—thus. *(He drinks.)*

PERIVALE. I am glad to know the philosophy of it.

MUMMER. Of Food I have no philosophy, save that her handmaiden, Sleep, is ever in attendance. I eat, I sleep ; I wake, I drink. This morning I must be wakeful, for I have business at the Castle. The food, therefore, is yours, friend. I confine myself to the bottle. *(He*

*drinks.*) And what might you be by profession who seek the truth so earnestly ?

PERIVALE. I ? Oh, nothing very much—I am a King.

MUMMER (*laughing*). That's good ! That's very good !

PERIVALE. I am glad you like it.

MUMMER. A King ! Do you know what I am ?

PERIVALE. You have travelled, at least. So much I can see.

MUMMER. Travelled, ay ! How could I be here an' I had not travelled ? For behold ! I am the Emperor of China !

PERIVALE. Your Imperial Majesty is welcome in my country.

MUMMER. It isn't often, I dare say, that an Emperor and a King sit down to their bit of breakfast together.

PERIVALE. Fortunately not, for I confess that I have always found it fatiguing.

MUMMER (*clapping him on the back*). Capital ! You show promise—on my soul you do !

PERIVALE. Promise of what ?

MUMMER. You should be in my profession.

PERIVALE. I understood that I was.

MUMMER. Now, now, let us be serious !

PERIVALE. I cannot be more serious, I promise you.

MUMMER. I put it to you. If I am not the Emperor of China, what am I ?

PERIVALE. The Empress. Is it a riddle ?

MUMMER. Not that I would change places with the Emperor, mark you, for I will have nothing said against my profession.

PERIVALE. It is a better profession than the Emperor's, I make no doubt.

MUMMER (*proudly*). I am a mummer !

PERIVALE (*with a shrug*). Ah, well, it is the same.

MUMMER. Now if you had gone to one of the country-

folk around here, and said boldly as you said to me, "I am the King!" it may be that he would have believed you.

PERIVALE. I think perhaps that he would.

MUMMER. But when you say it to me, I don't believe you. Why?

PERIVALE. I have no idea.

MUMMER. Why, because I am familiar with Kings. I have played a hundred Kings. I know how Kings talk.

PERIVALE. How do they talk? I have often wondered.

MUMMER. It is not so much what they say, as how they say it. It is not so much how they say it, as how they look it. It is not so much how they look it, as how they feel it. It is an art. There is a kingly air and a common air.

PERIVALE. Mine was the common air. I felt it.

MUMMER. Ah, well, you lack the practice. But I could make something of you. (*Rising*) Now suppose that I am giving one of my renowned and popular renderings of the Emperor of China. How do I play it?

PERIVALE. I am hoping to see.

MUMMER (*with a wave of the hand*). These are my castle walls. I saunter by the side of them, deep in kingly thought. (*He saunters.*) I espy you here (*he espies*) where you have no business to be. I bid you begone. That, in the rough, is the situation; the bones of the play. Now then! Mark me! (*He goes out and comes in.*) I approach terribly. (*He goes out and does it again—more terribly.*) Approaches terribly. Says commandingly—now mark this—What have we here?

PERIVALE (*meekly*). Me. What do I say?

MUMMER. Let me think! . . . Yes, this will give it to me.

Tremblingly—"A poor man, Your Majesty, who means no harm."

PERIVALE (*tremblingly*). A poor man, Your Majesty, who means no harm.

MUMMER. Excellent! Excellent! The common touch—you have it. It comes natural to you. (*Murmuring to himself*) A poor man, Your Majesty—now just give me that again. What——

PERIVALE. A poor man——

MUMMER. Wait for it! (*Commandingly*) What have we here?

PERIVALE. A poor man, Your Majesty, who means no harm.

MUMMER (*terribly*). Begone to thy kennel, thou rascally rogue, ere I set my dogs on thee!

PERIVALE. Yes, I should be gone in that case.

MUMMER. You see! The Royal touch. One has it or one has not. There is no mistaking it. Now let me see what *you* make of it. (PERIVALE *rises*.) Goes out left. Enters *terribly*. Discovers varlet against castle wall. Dismisses varlet. Now then. (*He assumes character of varlet*.)

PERIVALE (*entering terribly*). What——

MUMMER. Good! Good! A little more air.

PERIVALE (*re-entering*). What have we here?

MUMMER. A poor man, Your Majesty, who means no harm.

PERIVALE (*thundering, hand to dagger*). Get thee hence, thou pock-faced knave, else I cleave thee to the marrow!

MUMMER (*completely taken aback for the moment*). Er—promising: Very promising. (*Recovering*) But just lacking in that something. You see the difference? The kingly air, the common air. There is no mistaking it.

PERIVALE (*with a yawn*). Well, if I lack the kingly air, I must needs make my way without it.

MUMMER. You are off?

PERIVALE (*lazily*). I should be homewards, for they will be looking for me, but it is pleasant here. (*He sits down again.*)

MUMMER. You have a home? I took you for a wanderer like myself.

PERIVALE. A sort of home. Yet, in a way, hardly a home.

MUMMER. You are married, perhaps? I had sworn to you for a single man.

PERIVALE. To be frank, friend, I am to be married to-day.

MUMMER (*gloomily*). I wish you well.

PERIVALE. I thank you for your enthusiasm.

MUMMER. Is she beautiful?

PERIVALE. They say so. I have never seen her.

MUMMER. Beware of beautiful women.

PERIVALE. I will remember your warning.

MUMMER. Does she speak with a fair, soft voice?

PERIVALE. So they tell me. I have never spoken with her.

MUMMER. Be very ware of the fair, soft voice.

PERIVALE (*smiling*). I will mistrust its every word.

MUMMER. Has she a firm, cool hand?

PERIVALE. They credit her with it. I have never touched it.

MUMMER. Misdoubt the firm, cool hand.

PERIVALE. I will suspect the worst of it.

MUMMER. How comes it that you marry a woman whose face you have never seen, whose voice you have never heard, whose hand you have never touched?

PERIVALE (*lightly*). It is the way in our family.

MUMMER. Perhaps it is as good a way as another. There can be no recriminations between you afterwards.

PERIVALE. I perceive that you are an enthusiast about marriage.



MUMMER. No, I am not an enthusiast.

PERIVALE (*apologetically*). Your pardon. I mistook you.

MUMMER. But I wish you well. (*He takes a last drink.*)

PERIVALE. I am glad of your good wishes. Let us hope that they will avail me.

MUMMER. Well, I am for the Castle.

PERIVALE. Fare you well.

MUMMER. Farewell.

(*The MUMMER goes out, singing to himself. He stops, looks back at PERIVALE, says scornfully, "A King!", laughs, and goes on with his song and his journey.*)

PERIVALE (*sleepily*). No, only a legend! (*He closes his eyes.*)

## ACT II

### SCENE 2

*The Courtyard of the Castle. At the back is the Great Gate through which the PRINCESS LILIA must come to her bridegroom—almost at any moment now. On the right, steps lead up to the entrance to the Palace ; on the left are the soldiers' quarters.*

*Two of the soldiers, CARLO and TITUS, are on guard, or would be if they thought their CAPTAIN was at hand. CARLO, in fact, is finishing off a late night's sleep, while TITUS marches idly up and down thinking of the girl he is going to marry. A mile away the MUMMER has said "Farewell" to PERIVALE and is climbing the hill.*

*TITUS catches sight of CARLO suddenly, and decides to indulge the sense of humour which his girl admires so much in him. He takes up a position at the top of the Palace steps.*

*TITUS (in a loud official voice). His Majesty King Perivale !*

*(CARLO wakes up with a start, and jumps to his feet.*

*TITUS roars with laughter.)*

*CARLO (sulkily). A fool's trick. (He settles down again.)*

*TITUS. You'd have looked the fool if it had truly been His Majesty.*

*CARLO. I'm not afraid of any Majesty.*

*TITUS (ironically). I had noticed it, Carlo.*

*CARLO. Not man to man. I would fight him, if he would fight man to man.*

TITUS. You ! He could pass the time with three of you together, and then not be properly breathed for his wedding. (*Sitting down next to him*) Did you never hear how he dealt with the Five Robbers in the Forest ? He was riding alone, going to meet the Princess Lilia, they say, when suddenly——

CARLO. They say ! They say many things. This Princess Lilia that we wait for now——

TITUS (*ironically*). So alertly——

CARLO (*placidly*). Time enough when the Great Bell sounds. This Princess Lilia, our new Queen, rest our souls, do you know what they say of *her* ?

TITUS. That she is the most beautiful woman in the world.

CARLO. And so she may be. And so, seeing where she comes from, I make no doubt she is.

TITUS (*surprised*). Where she comes from ?

CARLO (*nodding*). They say she's the Devil's Brat. They say her mother——

TITUS. Who says it ?

CARLO. Who says it ? Everyone says it. It is well known.

TITUS (*annoyed*). I don't know it.

CARLO. That's why I'm telling you. Her mother was in league with the Devil. All women are, as far as that goes, but she went farther than most. One night, so they say, when her husband the King——

TITUS (*contemptuously, getting up and walking away*). Keep your silly lies for your friends in the tavern. I'll have none of them.

CARLO. Lies, you say. I'll prove it to you. (*Weightily*) Now then. If she is the Devil's Brat, what would you expect her to have ? You would expect her to have pointed ears.

TITUS. Why ?

CARLO (*annoyed*). Why? Because that's how you recognise them, of course.

TITUS (*reluctantly*). Well?

CARLO. Well, if she had pointed ears, what would you expect her to do? You would expect her to hide them, being the Devil's Brat and up to the Devil's tricks to deceive saintly men.

TITUS. Well?

CARLO. Well, your Princess Lilia *does* hide them! She wears her hair low down on her head so as to hide her ears from saintly men. (*With conviction*) The Devil's Brat.

TITUS (*impressed*). Ah!

CARLO. And if you ask *me* what is on the other side of the Ivory Door, I can tell you that too. (*Impressively*) Her uncles and her aunts and her cousins and her nephews, and all the whole tribe of them—waiting for King Perivale!

TITUS (*uneasily*). Lies!

CARLO. Facts. There's no running away from facts. Mind you, I say nothing against the King getting married. From all I hear it's time he *was* married. Everybody knows——

TITUS (*furiously*). Say another word against His Majesty, and I'll run you through where you sit.

CARLO (*jumping up*). Easy, friend, easy!

TITUS. I warn you I'll hear nothing against His Majesty. As proper a King——

CARLO (*shaking his head sadly*). You are a simple fellow, Titus. I know your sort. One of those simpletons who believe the best of everybody.

TITUS. And I know *your* sort. One of those innocents who believe the worst of everybody. And your sort of fool is the bigger fool of the two.

CARLO (*pulling at his dagger*). Innocent! (*Aghast*)

You dare to call me innocent! No man calls me innocent and lives.

TITUS (*laughing*). I have already called you a liar, and I live.

CARLO (*furiously*). I care nothing for your liar. But innocent! Spear or dagger, which you will. I'll have your blood for that word.

TITUS (*putting down his spear and taking out his dagger*). Dagger, then. (*With mock fear*) But if I die, Carlo, if you kill me, Carlo, will you do one thing for me, Carlo?

CARLO. Well?

TITUS. Tell my friends that I died—believing in your innocence! (*He laughs.*)

CARLO (*rushing at him*). Have at you!

(*The CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD comes in ; a red-faced fiercely-moustached fighter with an insolent blue eye, and all the impregnable vanity of the stupid man who has risen to authority. But instinctively a good soldier so long as he is not thinking ; and a humorist when he cannot be answered back.*)

CAPTAIN. Now then! Now then! Now then! Now then! What's all this? What's all this?

(*The fighters draw apart from each other.*)

CARLO (*sulkily*). He insulted me.

CAPTAIN. *Insulted* you! By the Ivory Door and all the Little Devils! *Insulted you!* Five-and-thirty years have I been in His Majesty's Bodyguard, and never before have I heard of a Spearman being insulted! No, no, my lad, such compliments are not for a common soldier. You must wait until you are an officer for that.

CARLO (*meekly*). Yes, captain.

CAPTAIN. That's a good lad. (*Fiercely to TITUS*) And what of you, boy?

TITUS (*taken aback*). He—he challenged me. I—I had to defend myself. He would have run me through.

CAPTAIN. And why not? Couldn't you have trusted your captain to have dealt justice on him afterwards?

TITUS. Yes, but—I—I didn't want to be run through.

CAPTAIN (*scornfully*). Didn't want! And are the fads of a common soldier to be allowed to interfere with the course of Military Justice? By the Ivory Door and all the Little Devils! Five-and-thirty years——

(*The Great Bell sounds.*)

CARLO. Her Royal Highness!

(*He goes to the wicket-gate as men come running out of the Guard Room.*)

CAPTAIN. Fall in there!

CARLO (*with a laugh*). A false alarm.

CAPTAIN (*to the men*). Fall out. (*To CARLO*) What is it?

CARLO. A mumming-fellow. I have seen him in the tavern.

CAPTAIN. Come to give His Majesty sport, it may be. Has he any with him?

CARLO. No.

CAPTAIN. Let him in. (*CARLO opens the gate and the MUMMER comes in. The CAPTAIN stands squarely in front of him.*) Well, friend, how is it with you?

MUMMER (*with a low bow*). His Majesty King Perivale beyond a doubt.

CARLO. Ha-ha-ha!

(*He catches the CAPTAIN's eye, and stands hurriedly to attention.*)

CAPTAIN (*twisting his moustache*). A foolish mistake, friend. His Majesty is a younger man.

TITUS (*safely, the joke being the CAPTAIN's*). Ha-ha-ha!

MUMMER. And, without doubt, plainer. I see it now. Your pardon for the error.

CAPTAIN (*nodding*). I like you, friend. There is that



in your face which attracts me. You shall drink with me.

MUMMER. It is most condescending of your lordship.

CAPTAIN. Say no more. We have good wine in the buttery yonder. . . . I will await your return with the bottle.

MUMMER. Nay, but it is not thus that I offer hospitality to warriors. (*Clapping his hands in a lordly manner*) Ho, there! Wine! (*He whisks out a bottle from the recesses of his clothing, and holds it out.*) Wine.

(*The CAPTAIN takes it.*)

CAPTAIN (*admiringly*). A pretty trick—and a pretty wine. Let me return your hospitality. (*Holding up his hand*) I insist. It is a privilege to me to entertain genius. (*He puts down the bottle and claps his hands*) Ho, there! Wine!

(*He looks anxiously at the back of the MUMMER'S cloak.*)

MUMMER (*shaking his head*). I have already drunk. Yet I thank you for your thought.

CAPTAIN. It is well. (*He applies himself to the bottle.*) We will sit down and consider the matter.

(*They sit down.*)

MUMMER. You have a wedding here?

CAPTAIN. His Majesty's. We await the bride. (*He drinks.*)

MUMMER. I have seen no great company upon the road.

CAPTAIN. She comes alone. Such is the custom. One attends her to the Gate.

MUMMER (*disappointed*). Ah! (*Hopefully*) Yet there will be feasting within the Castle?

CAPTAIN. Without doubt. . . . And other entertainment.

MUMMER (*anxiously*). You like the wine?

CAPTAIN. Greatly.

MUMMER. I had wondered——

CAPTAIN. After another bottle I shall be able to follow your argument.

MUMMER. It is an honour to converse with a mind so active as your lordship's. My little company sojourns below. At the time appointed——

CAPTAIN. If they are all as gifted as yourself—as I have seen you to be with mine own eyes—— (*He raises the bottle and drinks.*)

MUMMER. In the one particular, without doubt. They are well rehearsed.

CAPTAIN. I shall be glad to make their acquaintance.

MUMMER. In their performance before His Majesty, and his Queen, should they be so honoured, they will do you credit.

CAPTAIN. They shall not lack the opportunity.

MUMMER (*admiringly*). How delicately your lordship follows me.

(*There is a knock at the Great Gate.*)

CAPTAIN. And who might that be, disturbing honest men? Titus!

(*TITUS comes slowly across, but the MUMMER, eager to oblige, jumps to his feet.*)

MUMMER. Nay, friend, let me. (*He goes to the wicket and comes back laughing.*)

CAPTAIN. Well?

MUMMER. A wandering fellow who shared my breakfast. A pleasant melancholy fellow, yet a man of infinite jest. He would have it that he was a King. (*The CAPTAIN laughs. The MUMMER goes back to the wicket, and calls through it*) Well met, Your Majesty!

(*He chuckles to himself and waits for the answer.*)

TITUS and CARLO have drawn near.)

PERIVALE (*pleasantly*). What, is it the Emperor of China again?

MUMMER (*chuckling. To CAPTAIN*). You see? We have our little jest together.

(TITUS and CARLO *laugh*.)

CAPTAIN. I am a humorous man myself.

MUMMER. Who could doubt it of your lordship?

CAPTAIN. Titus, am I not a humorous man?

TITUS. Never was such before, Captain.

CAPTAIN (*shouting humorously*). Your Majesty must needs wait! We entertain Emperors! (*To MUMMER*) There! Was not that humorous?

MUMMER. Excellently diverting.

PERIVALE (*thundering*). Within there! Open!

(TITUS and CARLO *roar with laughter*.)

MUMMER (*proudly*). You mark the trick of voice? I taught him that. He has a certain natural gift for it, but untrained.

CAPTAIN. Well, let him in. He may have other tricks to show us. Tricks with bottles.

(CARLO *opens the gate, and PERIVALE stands in the entrance, looking at them.*)

PERIVALE (*coldly*). Well?

CAPTAIN (*to his bottle*). It is well, friend. I am well, you are well, this bottle is well. It is well-nigh finished.

(TITUS and CARLO *laugh*.)

PERIVALE (*sternly*). Is this how you wait for Her Royal Highness?

CAPTAIN. Her Royal Highness is well.

MUMMER (*admiringly, to PERIVALE*). Just a little more air—a little more—(*he makes a kingly gesture*)—but promising, very promising.

PERIVALE (*impatiently*). Peace, fool, we are not mumming now.

CAPTAIN (*closing his eyes*). Peace. It is a blessed word.

PERIVALE (*in disgust*). Drunk !

CAPTAIN (*getting slowly to his feet*). Drunk ! By the Ivory Door and all the Little Devils, you dare to call me drunk ! (*He sees PERIVALE and starts back, rubbing his eyes and blinking. Sinking down again*) I am drunk ! Titus, tell him I've never been drunk before. Tell him I'm a humorous man by nature.

TITUS (*patting PERIVALE on the shoulder*). Now, now, friend, be reasonable. We're all humorous men here, but a joke is only a joke so long as the Captain is making it. Yours has gone far enough. Tell us your business and begone about it.

PERIVALE (*looking at them wonderingly*). What's the matter with you all ? Don't you know who I am ?

CARLO. Neither know, nor care.

PERIVALE (*mildly*). I am the King.

MUMMER (*shaking his head*). No, no, all gone now. (*Mimicking him*) "I am the King." Hopeless, hopeless !

PERIVALE (*thundering*). Fool ! I am the King !

MUMMER. Ah, that's better !

TITUS. Now, now, I'm your friend. Take my advice and go home before there's trouble.

CAPTAIN. Drunk ! After one bottle !

PERIVALE (*bewildered*). What has happened ? (*To TITUS*) You are new to His Majesty's service. I do not remember your face. (*Looking at CARLO*) Yours, yes, but not your name. But this——(*he kicks a foot contemptuously at the CAPTAIN*)——old Bruno——

TITUS (*in awe to CARLO*). Bruno ! He calls a captain——Bruno !

CARLO (*tapping his head*). Mad.

CAPTAIN. Take him away. I don't like his face. Drunk !

TITUS (*earnestly*). Be reasonable, friend. If His

Majesty had been outside the Castle, how should we not have known it? How was he to get through the Gate, if no one opened to him? His Majesty is within, waiting for his bride. Be reasonable.

(PERIVALE *stands thinking. Then he smiles; frowns again; and finally, with another look round at them all, smiles to himself.*)

PERIVALE (*to himself*). The door was more magic than I thought.

TITUS. What's he saying?

CARLO (*without hope*). Mad!

PERIVALE (*mildly, to TITUS*). Friend—for you seem to be friendly to me—could someone send for His Majesty's servant, that I might speak to him?

CAPTAIN (*sleepily*). We are all His Majesty's servants.

PERIVALE (*looking at him*). Clearly. (*To TITUS*) But I meant his body-servant, Brand. It may be that—

(*But he is interrupted by the growing noise of some disturbance within the Castle—at first a confused uproar, in which no word can be identified.*)

CAPTAIN (*a man of war again; jumping to his feet*). What's that? (*Roaring*) To your posts, there. (*The soldiers come hurrying in from their quarters*). Titus, guard these two! This may be a plot. (*Roaring*) Jump to it, my beauties!

(*Now voices are heard. "The King!" "The King!" And then a woman's voice, "Dead!"*

SIMEON, THORA and others appear for a moment at the Palace doors.)

SIMEON. The King!

CAPTAIN (*sharply*). Well, what of the King?

THORA. Dead!

CAPTAIN. Dead?

THORA. And Her Royal Highness all but here!

CAPTAIN. How dead?

SIMEON. He went through the Ivory Door !

THORA. He's dead.

CAPTAIN (*nodding his head in awe*). He did so ! In the name of the Door and all the Little Devils, why should he do that ?

SIMEON. He found the key. He would go. Brand tried to stay him. He said he must *know* what was there.

CAPTAIN (*grimly*). And now he knows.

PERIVALE (*ironically*). And now he knows.

(*The CAPTAIN turns sharply to him.*)

CAPTAIN. Ah ! . . . Ah ! (*To SIMEON*) Where is Brand ?

SIMEON. With the Chancellor, Captain—acquainting him of the dreadful news.

CAPTAIN. Tell His Excellency that I have a prisoner here who can throw some light on the matter.

SIMEON. Yes, Captain.

(*He goes in, followed by THORA and the others.*)

CAPTAIN (*coming down to PERIVALE*). And now, my friend, we come back to you.

PERIVALE (*half mockingly, half regally*). We are delighted to give you audience.

MUMMER. But what—— The King is *dead*, they say ? Who——

CAPTAIN (*thoughtfully*). And you. Now I wonder if *you* come into it. (*To CARLO*) Here ! Take the old man away, and keep him where I can lay my hand on him.

MUMMER (*indignantly*). Old man ! (*To CARLO*) Keep your hands off me ! (*With dignity*) I have played Kings in the presence of Kings.

CAPTAIN. Ay, there are too many who have played Kings. I do not like this playing of Kings. (*To CARLO*) Take him off.

(*The MUMMER is led off, protesting.*)



PERIVALE. There is no harm in him.

CAPTAIN. I care not for him. (*Softly*) But what of you, friend? (*Poking him in the chest with a finger*) You come pat to the moment. The King is dead—and lo! In struts one, like to the King, who says he *is* the King! How came it that you *knew* the King was dead and could not give you the lie?

PERIVALE (*with a smile*). You are too subtle for me, Bruno.

CAPTAIN (*with a laugh*). Try again, Master King. It would not be difficult to learn my name.

PERIVALE. Yet the fact that I know it is hardly proof that I am not the King.

CAPTAIN (*poking him in the chest*). Pat to the moment.

PERIVALE (*motioning the finger away*). Do you know, you are the only man who has ever done that to me? I don't think I like it.

CAPTAIN. What if I say to you that you were lurking behind the Ivory Door when His Majesty went through? That it was you who killed him?

PERIVALE (*contemptuously*). I thought they were devils, not men, who waited behind the door.

CAPTAIN. And why should you not be one of them?

PERIVALE. Looking like this? Without horns and a tail? Oh, come!

CAPTAIN. As you say. Looking like this. Taking on human shape. The shape of his late lamented Majesty.

PERIVALE (*ironically*). Oh, you do see a likeness?

CAPTAIN (*grimly*). I do. That's what makes me suspicious.

(*The CHANCELLOR comes in, followed respectfully by some of the people.*)

CHANCELLOR. Alas! Alas! Woeful news! His blessed Majesty dead—and on his marriage day! But we

must be calm. We must think what is best, what is safest. We must exercise our brains.

CAPTAIN (*coming to him*). You do the thinking, Excellency, and I will do the acting.

CHANCELLOR. Yes, yes, we must act. But first we must think . . . I warned him not to. I took that liberty. "Your Majesty," I said, "it is wiser, it is safer, to avert the eye—and the mind—from the unknown." I ventured to warn him. I said, "Your Majesty, be guided by me. Do not defy these evil spirits." Alas, alas!

OLD BEPPO (*to his neighbour*). A bottomless pit a-full of devils. Didn't I say?

CHANCELLOR. Alas, alas!

CAPTAIN (*impatiently*). Alas! Yes. And now to deeds, Excellency.

CHANCELLOR (*petulantly*). Deeds! Would you have me tell you to go through the Ivory Door after His Majesty?

ALL. No! No!

CAPTAIN (*bravely*). An' it were necessary, I would——

ALL. Bravo! Bravo!

CAPTAIN. Or send one of my gallant boys—but it is not necessary, Excellency. We know the evil fate which has befallen his blessed Majesty.

CHANCELLOR. We know—(*timidly*) and yet we do not know.

CAPTAIN. At least we have the man who slew him.

CHANCELLOR (*bewildered*). We have the man——

ALL. Where? Where is he?

CAPTAIN. Bring forward the prisoner, Titus.

(*TITUS marches PERIVALE forward.*)

CHANCELLOR (*amazed*). But—but——

PERIVALE (*to the CHANCELLOR*). As you said, Your Excellency, you warned me.

CHANCELLOR. But—but—who—what——

THORA (*happily*). His Majesty ! His Majesty is alive !

ALL. His Majesty !

(*PERIVALE takes a step towards them.*)

CHANCELLOR (*happily*). Your Majesty !

OLD BEPPO. Who is it ? Who do they say it is ?

ANTON. His Majesty !

CAPTAIN (*as the CHANCELLOR advances to PERIVALE*).  
Hold him, Titus.

(*The CHANCELLOR stops.*)

OLD BEPPO. But he's dead. He went through the Ivory Door. Wasn't I telling you ?

ANTON. Yes, he's dead. That's what *I* say.

CHANCELLOR (*a little doubtfully*). But, Your Majesty—I understood—Brand said——

CAPTAIN (*with a loud, contemptuous laugh*). So he deceives *you*, too !

CHANCELLOR. Deceives me ? But is it not—— (*Doubtfully again*) Yet if His Majesty went through the Ivory Door——

SIMEON (*nervously*). No man can go through the Ivory Door and live.

(*There are murmurs of assent.*)

SIMEON (*more confidently*). No man can go——

PERIVALE (*firmly*). Your Excellency, it is my pleasure to give you some account of my movements—and with that the matter ends. I went through the Ivory Door, as Brand has said. I came out beyond the Castle Walls. I walked round to the Great Gate, I knocked, the Gate was opened to me—and I found the Captain of my Body-guard with his bottle. The wine would seem to be at work on him still. That is all. (*Raising his voice*) I thank you all, good people, for your concern for my safety.

ALL. His Majesty is alive !

(*They cheer and advance towards him.*)

CHANCELLOR (*holding out his hand, overjoyed*). Your Majesty !

CAPTAIN (*to* TITUS). Hold the prisoner ! (*To the CROWD*) Back there ! (*To the* CHANCELLOR) Give me leave to speak, Your Excellency. (*To the* PEOPLE) Now listen ! I am a man of deeds, not words. But His Excellency tells us that we must think. Well, think then. In all our history how many have passed through the Ivory Door ? A many. How many have been seen again ? Not one. (" *True, true.*") Which is more likely then : that this man is the King come scatheless through perils which no other man has passed, or that he is an impostor ; himself, perhaps one of those devils, those evil spirits, which, as his Excellency has told us, and as we all know, lurk behind the Door waiting for their victims ? You may say, some of you, that you recognise your King. I say that if a Devil cannot take on the shape of this or that man, a poor Devil he. Of course he has the looks of the King ! Would you expect him to come with a hooked nose and a long beard, and whine " I am the King " ?

(*Laughter.*)

CHANCELLOR. True. . . . Yet he *may* be the King, even though he look like him.

THORA. *It is* the King !

CAPTAIN. Peace, woman, these are matters for men. (*To the* CHANCELLOR) He may be the King. Or he may not. I say he is not. There are ways of finding out. I say no more. (*He stands in front of the prisoner with folded arms.*)

(*The CROWD chatters while the CHANCELLOR, looking nervously at PERIVALE and away, ponders the question.*)

ANTON. No, it is not the King. I see it now. He is not even like the King.

JESSICA. But, Anton, how *could* it be the King if he was changed into a Black Leopard ?

OLD BEPPO (*gleefully*). *Two* Kings I've a-seen vanish into the air. Stephen was one, and here's another. No other mortal man has seen what I've seen. Two of 'em a-vanishing into nothingness.

THORA. It *is* the King. Didn't I speak to him, face to face ?

CHANCELLOR. H'r'm ! (*ALL stop talking.*) Yes—Well—We must proceed cautiously. As has been said, there are ways—an examination into the matter must be held—there are ways——

(*The great bell rings.*)

ALL. The Princess ! The Princess !

CHANCELLOR (*upset*). The Princess ! Yes, yes. This is very—— This is without precedent. The Princess ! What are we to say to her ? What are we to say ?

CAPTAIN (*slapping his knee*). By the Ivory Door and all the Little Devils, *she* has come pat to the moment, too ! Friends, here *is* your way !

CHANCELLOR. How—— What——

CAPTAIN. Can a woman be deceived in the face of the man she loves ?

THORA (*eagerly, clapping her hands*). Oh, well done, well done !

CAPTAIN. We know how it is between His Majesty and Her Royal Highness. If he is an impostor, will she not know, however like he be to the King ? If he is her lover, will she not know, however unkingly he be dressed ?

ALL. Bravo !

CHANCELLOR. It is true. We see with our eyes only, but she will see with her heart. Let her in. Let her be the judge.

(*PERIVALE gives a loud, mocking laugh.*)

CAPTAIN. Silence ! Say one word to her before she speaks, and I will run you through myself, King or no King.

PERIVALE. Alas ! I have no word left. (*With a sigh*) We have talked the truth away.

CAPTAIN (*to TITUS*). Open there !

TITUS (*at Gate*). Who comes ? (*He speaks in the voice of one using a ritual.*)

A MAN'S VOICE. Her Royal Highness Princess Lilia is come to His Majesty King Perivale.

TITUS. Withdraw, and let her be. (*After a moment, there is a knocking at the Gate.*) Who knocks ?

LILIA'S VOICE. Lilia is come to Perivale.

TITUS. Let her come. (*The Gate is thrown open, and LILIA comes in. The Gate is closed behind her.*) Her Royal Highness Princess Lilia is come home !

(*It is not the LILIA of the picture. That was a cold stately woman : this is a young impetuous girl. That was beautiful ; this has a wayward prettiness, no more. She waits, looking from one to the other of the faces round her, frightened at a silence almost breathless.*)

LILIA. Well ? I am come.

(*Still nobody says anything. Her eyes go slowly from one face to another. As she comes to PERIVALE, you can almost hear the people holding their breath. Her eyes rest on him with interest, but no more. They pass on to the next in the group ; and now it is as if all the company breathed again in one long expiration.*)

LILIA (*with a pretty dignity*). Will no one take me to His Majesty ? (*She turns to PERIVALE*) Will not you ?

CAPTAIN (*in fierce satisfaction*). Ah !

(*There is a threatening murmur from the CROWD.*)

LILIA (*to PERIVALE*). What is it ? I am frightened.



PERIVALE (*comfortingly*). No, no, you are not frightened.

LILIA. Will you take me to His Majesty?

THORA (*rushing forward and throwing herself at LILIA's feet*) Oh, Your Royal Highness! (*She crouches there, sobbing.*)

LILIA. What is it? (*She stoops to THORA*) What is it, child? I don't understand.

PERIVALE. The story goes——

CAPTAIN (*pushing PERIVALE roughly back*). Enough! Hold him, Carlo! Madam, this is our good Chancellor, who will tell you.

CHANCELLOR. H'r'm!

LILIA. Yes?

CHANCELLOR. Alas, Your Royal Highness, you come upon us at a grievous moment. His Majesty——alas! alas!—I have no words——

LILIA (*anxiously*). Yes?

CAPTAIN (*bluntly*). His Majesty is dead, lady. There are no words to make it less than that.

LILIA. Dead!

CHANCELLOR. Alas, Your Royal Highness, it is indeed so.

CAPTAIN. Killed by a base villain.

PERIVALE. Or so 'tis said.

CAPTAIN. Silence!

LILIA (*looking at PERIVALE*). Who is this man?

CAPTAIN. The knave who killed him.

LILIA (*her eyes on PERIVALE*). Yet he has a gentle face. I would trust him.

PERIVALE. He would be proud of your trust.

CARLO. Enough! (*He claps his hand over PERIVALE's mouth.*)

CAPTAIN. His face lies. He is all one lie.

(LILIA, *still bewildered, looks from one to the other, and then down at THORA.*)

LILIA. Who is this ?

VOICES. Thora, Your Royal Highness.

THORA (*rising*). I am Thora, Madam. His Majesty said that I was to be your friend. That you would be lonely and that I was to be your friend.

LILIA. Now am I very lonely if His Majesty is dead. Stand with me, my friend. (*She takes THORA's hand, and turns to the CHANCELLOR with dignity.*) Your Excellency was to tell me.

CHANCELLOR. Your Royal Highness. . . . His Majesty—There is in the Palace a door through which none may go, nor going, may return.

LILIA. I have heard of it, but doubted the tales I heard.

CHANCELLOR. Alas, madam, they are true. It is the doorway from this world. His Majesty went through—why, we know not, save that he would. He has gone from us. He can never come back.

(*LILIA turns to THORA questioningly.*)

THORA. It is true, madam. He is dead.

LILIA (*to CAPTAIN*). Then why do you say that this man killed him ?

CAPTAIN. As soon as he knows the King is truly dead, he comes pretending to be the King. How should he do that if he were not there to kill the King ?

LILIA. Is he so like the King, then ?

CAPTAIN. Like, as Your Royal Highness sees, and yet not like, as Your Royal Highness knows. A King is easily taken for granted, madam. He deceived some of us at first ; but not me, and not Your Royal Highness, who loved him too.

(*Again LILIA's eyes rest on PERIVALE.*)

LILIA (*to herself*). Who loved him too ! (*She looks round at them all, wondering.*)

CHANCELLOR. As you know, Your Royal Highness.

THORA (*breaking down again*). And now he is dead !

(*LILIA comforts her.*)

SIMEON (*to his neighbour*). Yes, we know now. He is dead.

ANTON (*carelessly*). I always said so. From the first.

LILIA (*to CHANCELLOR*). Where is this door ?

CHANCELLOR (*anxiously*). What is in Your Royal Highness' mind ?

LILIA (*to CAPTAIN*). You loved him, you say. How is it that you have not followed him through the door ?

ALL. No, no ! It is death. Death !

LILIA (*to CAPTAIN*). You are afraid of Death ?

CAPTAIN (*coolly*). No more afraid of it than I am anxious for it, madam.

LILIA. Yet you will not follow him ?

CAPTAIN. I will not follow a dead man. . . . But I will take vengeance on the living, madam, and—(*he bows to her*) I will be a faithful servant to the living.

LILIA (*looking round at them*). You are all so sure of his death ?

ALL. Yes, yes.

CHANCELLOR (*sadly*). It is certain, Your Royal Highness. None has ever come back. It was so that King Stephen perished. And many another.

LILIA (*wonderingly*). What waits there then ?

CHANCELLOR (*shuddering*). Death, madam. What else we know not, save that there be evil spirits there.

CAPTAIN (*putting his hand on PERIVALE'S shoulder*). And that this is one of them.

LILIA (*with sudden determination*). Show me the door !

THORA (*clinging to her*). Madam !

LILIA (*freeing herself*). Show me the door ! (*Looking round at them all*) You cowards ! To be afraid of a little door !

PERIVALE (*apologetically*). It is rather an odd little door.

CARLO. Peace ! (*He pulls him back roughly.*)

CHANCELLOR. Your Royal Highness ! Consider !

LILIA. I have considered.

SIMEON (*coming forward with a nervous cough*). Your Majesty, Your Excellency, Excellencies all, have I Your Majesty's permission——

LILIA. Yes ?

SIMEON. Your Majesty——

HIS NEIGHBOUR (*in a loud whisper*). Royal Highness.

SIMEON. Your Royal Highness is a stranger, not yet of this country. It had occurred to me—I was saying—that the Devil's power over those who venture through his door might be—might be——

(*He looks enquiringly at ANTON.*)

ANTON. Local. Local. It may be, it may be.

SIMEON. Local. Might not have effect over one coming from afar.

ALL. Well spoken ! Bravo ! (*A woman's voice*) Let her go, Captain !

CHANCELLOR (*to LILIA*). There may be truth in what he says.

LILIA (*to SIMEON*). Thank you.

SIMEON (*in confusion*). It had occurred to me—I just—— (*He subsides into the crowd, and finishes his sentence to his neighbours.*)

CAPTAIN (*shaking his head*). I doubt—I doubt—but if she is set on it——

LILIA (*with dignity*). I do as I please in this matter. (*To THORA*) You will show me ?

THORA (*fearfully*). I will show you.

LILIA. Thank you, Thora. (*To the CHANCELLOR*) You will not hurt this man (*she indicates PERIVALE*) until I come back ?

CHANCELLOR. We will wait, madam, until—— (*He hesitates.*)

LILIA (*with a smile*). Until I do *not* come back, you would say.

CAPTAIN. We will wait two hours, lady.

LILIA (*gravely*). Thank you. (*She waits a moment, looking at PERIVALE.*)

PERIVALE (*taking it from his pocket*). You will want the key, will you not ?

ALL. The key ! . . . Of course, the key ! . . . Where *was* the key ?

PERIVALE. You will want to take the key with you.

CHANCELLOR. The key ! I had forgotten the key. (*To PERIVALE, surprised*) You have the key ?

CAPTAIN (*with a contemptuous laugh*). Of course he has the key ! Is he not the Devil's doorkeeper ?

ALL. Of course !

PERIVALE (*giving it to LILIA*). You will want to—take it with you.

LILIA (*nodding*). I will take it with me.

PERIVALE (*with a nod and a smile*). We shall meet again.

(*She looks at him, seems to be about to speak, and then turns abruptly away.*)

LILIA (*to THORA*). I am ready.

(*THORA leads the way into the Palace ; LILIA follows.*

*One by one the people, as if not wanting to go, but irresistibly drawn, fall in behind, the CHANCELLOR last. Only the CAPTAIN, the SOLDIERS and PERIVALE are left. But the desire to see what happens to LILIA is too much, even for the CAPTAIN.*)

CAPTAIN (*to TITUS*). Here ! Hold this man with Carlo. Has he arms ?

CARLO (*taking PERIVALE's dagger*). Not now, Captain.

CAPTAIN (*contemptuously*). Let him rest if he will, but keep near him.

TITUS. As you say, Captain.

(*Again the CAPTAIN wavers ; and then, with a jerk of the head to the other soldiers—an invitation to them to follow him if they wish—he goes into the Palace. They follow eagerly.*)

TITUS (*to PERIVALE*). I warned you.

PERIVALE. You warned me too. If you will give me room, I will meditate on my folly. (*He sits down.*)

TITUS (*to his COMRADE*). Give him room.

(*They move a little away from him. PERIVALE sits there, his chin on his hand, thinking.*)

PERIVALE (*with a little smile*). I suppose this was what happened to Stephen.



### ACT III

SCENE : *The Throne Room of the Palace. The CAPTAIN, walking up and down, with many a puzzled glance at the Ivory Door, and the CHANCELLOR, seated on PERIVALE'S throne, with many a frightened glance away from the Ivory Door, are waiting. . . . A soldier is in attendance.*

CAPTAIN. She will not come back.

CHANCELLOR. We said two hours. It is not two hours.

CAPTAIN. She will not come back. They will take good care of that.

CHANCELLOR (*quivering*). They ?

CAPTAIN (*nodding at the door*). They.

CHANCELLOR (*in distress*). I do not like it. See what His Majesty has plunged us into ! The door was locked. Why did he open it ? You cannot open a door from one side only. He was for venturing into *their* world, and he has brought them into ours. I warned him.

CAPTAIN. It was not by *my* wish that Her Royal Highness went.

CHANCELLOR. She would go, she would go—and it is not yet two hours. . . . (*Nervously*) Did you—when she—before the door closed behind her—did you see anything ?

CAPTAIN (*hesitating*). N—no. (*Firmly*) No !

CHANCELLOR (*nodding*). That was what I saw.

CAPTAIN (*loudly*). I saw nothing !

CHANCELLOR (*hastily*). Nothing. Nothing. Indeed, my eyes were closed. I would not look.

(*They both look now. Shrinkingly.*)

CAPTAIN (*pulling himself together*). We shall do no good by this. What of the man we have?

CHANCELLOR. The—the prisoner?

CAPTAIN. Yes. Shall we have him in?

CHANCELLOR. It is not the two hours. We said we would——

CAPTAIN. We said we would do him no hurt. We can question him. That will not hurt him.

CHANCELLOR. No.

CAPTAIN (*to SOLDIER*). Bring him in.

[*The SOLDIER goes out.*]

CHANCELLOR (*doubtfully*). You are certain?

CAPTAIN. Of what?

CHANCELLOR. If we did not know that he could not have come back——

CAPTAIN. The King?

CHANCELLOR. He is very like.

CAPTAIN. And yet not like.

CHANCELLOR (*nodding*). It is strange, that. Sometimes I feel—— You knew him well? As well as I?

CAPTAIN. Did I not teach him as a boy? Sword and dagger, bow or spear—was there ever such a pupil?

CHANCELLOR. I too taught him. (*With a sigh*) How quickly he passed beyond me!

CAPTAIN (*conventionally polite*). He had a good master, Excellency.

CHANCELLOR (*equally polite*). As I was about to say, Captain.

CAPTAIN (*conventionally modest*). It was a privilege to teach him. But, as you say, Excellency, he passed beyond us. We shall have no other King like him.

CHANCELLOR. Indeed, no.

(CARLO and TITUS come in with PERIVALE.)

CAPTAIN. Stand him there. You will question him, Excellency ?

PERIVALE (*anxiously*). Is it the two hours ?

CAPTAIN. What is that to you ?

PERIVALE. I am anxious for her Royal Highness.

CAPTAIN (*with a sneer*). Perhaps you have reason to be.

PERIVALE (*gently*). I am beginning to have reason to be. (To CHANCELLOR) Is it the two hours ?

CHANCELLOR. Not yet.

PERIVALE (*relieved*). Ah !

CHANCELLOR. But we would ask you some questions.

PERIVALE (*with a shrug*). You will not like my answers.

CHANCELLOR. Your name ?

PERIVALE. Perivale.

CHANCELLOR (*with dignity*). Your *real* name ?

PERIVALE. Perivale.

CAPTAIN. An obstinate fellow.

CHANCELLOR. You persist that you are the King ?

PERIVALE. That I was the King. Your Excellency seems to have succeeded me.

CAPTAIN. An insolent fellow.

(The CHANCELLOR, who was rising apologetically, sits down again.)

CHANCELLOR (*with dignity*). Believe me, young sir, if His Majesty were alive, he would be seated here, and I should kneel rejoicing at his feet.

PERIVALE. We will try the position, when you are ready.

CAPTAIN. You have your answers pat. Answer this. If you are the King, why did Her Royal Highness not recognise you ?

PERIVALE. She had never seen me before.

CAPTAIN (*with a scornful laugh*). As we thought.

CHANCELLOR. You admit it ?

PERIVALE. She had never seen the King before.

CAPTAIN (*calmly*). That we know to be a lie.

CHANCELLOR (*with a knowing smile*). His Majesty and Her Royal Highness were well known——

PERIVALE. Legend !

CAPTAIN (*To* TITUS). Fetch the girl Thora.

CHANCELLOR (*puzzled*). It was well known——

CAPTAIN. It *is* well known.

PERIVALE. Legend. A love-match. You liked it better that way. Indeed, it sounded well.

CHANCELLOR (*peevishly*). Legend—it is an easy thing to say. Indeed, it does sound well. We shall have one coming and saying, “I am the Chancellor”. “Your pardon,” they will reply, “I remember the Chancellor—he had a beard.” “Legend!” “He was a short man.” “Legend!” “He could read and write.” “All legend.” Indeed, it sounds very well.

(*He is pleased with his exercise in irony, but PERIVALE has not been listening.*)

PERIVALE. Is it the two hours ? She should be here.

CHANCELLOR (*very sarcastic now*). For one who has never seen her you are very anxious.

PERIVALE. I have seen her now—and I am very anxious.

(*TITUS comes back with THORA.*)

CAPTAIN. Ah ! (*He takes THORA by the arm*) Now, girl ! I heard you talking. There is nothing to fear. But His Excellency would hear too. You were to be maid to Her Royal Highness ?

THORA (*anxiously*). Yes !

CAPTAIN. When His Majesty told you of this, he went on to tell you of something else. What was it ?

THORA. Do you mean of his love ?

CAPTAIN. I am asking you.

THORA (*to CHANCELLOR*). He told me of his love for Her Royal Highness, of how he had met her in the Forest in her peasant dress, of—of their love for each other—ah, the poor lady! All that love could not keep him alive.

CHANCELLOR. He told you this himself, you say? Of how he had met her?

THORA. Yes, Your Excellency. He was kind and friendly. We talked of Her Royal Highness—always of her.

CAPTAIN. And he told you how it was between them? He himself told you?

THORA (*nodding*). He told me how it was. How they had met.

CAPTAIN (*dismissing her*). Good girl. (*He makes a sign to TITUS.*)

CHANCELLOR. Thank you. That is all. We wished to be sure of it.

THORA (*anxiously, as she is going out*). Her Royal Highness——? (*The CHANCELLOR shakes his head.*) (*With a sigh*) I knew it.

[*She goes out.*]

CAPTAIN (*to PERIVALE*). Well?

CHANCELLOR. Do you still say “Legend”?

PERIVALE (*with a shrug*). I say nothing—save that I was once your King.

CAPTAIN. An obstinate fellow.

CHANCELLOR. You give us no proof.

CAPTAIN. He has given us enough. If he wants more, I will carve it on him with my sword.

CHANCELLOR (*eagerly*). Ah, now there! I will not judge any man hastily. But there is proof you can give us. His Majesty was a mighty swordsman. It was well known to us all that he could engage any three swordsmen in his army. Now if you——

PERIVALE (*scornfully*). Ha !

CAPTAIN. He fears it ! I was sure ! He fears me alone, and His Majesty could engage three.

CHANCELLOR. In philosophy, again, knowledge of the stars, illuminated lettering, painting, use of the bow, our King was known to excel the most gifted of his subjects. If you could show us—— We will be patient. It shall be for you to choose what you will show us. Then can we judge fairly.

CAPTAIN (*taking out his sword*). Let him choose the sword, and I will give him judgement and sentence in one thrust.

PERIVALE (*sadly*). Was your King so gifted ?

CHANCELLOR (*eagerly*). He was a man above all men to be praised.

PERIVALE (*shaking his head*). He was a man above all men to be pitied.

CHANCELLOR. So, then you will show us——?

PERIVALE (*curtly*). I can show you nothing.

CHANCELLOR (*distressed*). You do not help us. I say “Here are facts to be proved or disproved”. *Prove* that you are the King. Our King could do this or that. What can *you* do ?

PERIVALE. All that your King could do.

CHANCELLOR. Then will you not do it for proof to us ?

PERIVALE (*smiling sadly*). Alas, I am doing it.

CAPTAIN (*impatiently*). You give us words. You have no deeds to show us. Kingly deeds.

PERIVALE (*bitterly*). Kingly deeds ! They are not done by Kings. (*Sadly*) I have no kingly deeds.

CHANCELLOR. Then how can you be the King ?

PERIVALE. You make me wonder.

CAPTAIN. Why waste more words on him ? A King ! He ! (*He jerks a contemptuous thumb at him.*)

PERIVALE (*indicating them with a finger*). A Captain, a Chancellor—we are a poor company, but it is the best that we can do.

(*There is a noise outside, and ANNA's voice is heard.*)

ANNA (*from outside*). How dare you talk to me like that? Don't you know who I am? Trying to frighten me! Have you no manners? (*She comes in.*) Ah, there you are, dearie! They said you had run away and been killed. But I knew you would come back. Why, there's your sweetheart waiting for you! (*Chuckling*) It would be a funny thing if you had run away from her just as she was coming to your arms. "No, no," I said, "they've been waiting for this day—I won't say for kisses—they've been waiting for this day, and now that it's here——"

PERIVALE (*shaking his head at her*). Oh, Anna!

ANNA. What is it, Your Majesty?

CAPTAIN (*contemptuously*). That mad woman! Take her out, Titus!

ANNA. What mad woman? What's he talking about, dear? (*To CAPTAIN*) Leave us. His Majesty and I would be alone.

PERIVALE. I think, dear, if you would go with Titus——

ANNA (*looking at TITUS*). Go with Titus, yes. He's a handsome young man. Come along, dearie, come with me, I'm not so old as I look.

CARLO. Ha-ha-ha!

(*He pulls himself together, and tries to look as if he hadn't.*)

CAPTAIN (*roaring*). Take that woman out!

TITUS. Come along! (*He marches her out firmly.*)

ANNA (*as she goes*). I don't do this for nothing, mind you.

CHANCELLOR. Really, really!



PERIVALE. She called me Your Majesty. I must have been right after all.

CAPTAIN (*contemptuously*). A mad woman !

CHANCELLOR. And not a very nice woman.

PERIVALE. Still, she recognised me.

CAPTAIN. Ha ! If that is the best you can do——

PERIVALE. No, I can do better than that. (*He pauses.*)

CHANCELLOR. Well ?

PERIVALE. Will you not send for Brand, His Majesty's body-servant ? Who should know His Majesty so well as he ?

CAPTAIN. What need ? *We* know.

CHANCELLOR (*judicially*). But if we know, Brand will know. As he says, Brand is most closely acquainted with His Majesty. It seems to me——

CAPTAIN (*to TITUS as he returns*). Bring in Brand. (*TITUS goes out again.*) What disturbs you, Excellency ?

CHANCELLOR. Habit. For years my voice has answered "Your Majesty" to the voice of another. Reason keeps telling me that I do not hear that voice now, but I find that Habit has already answered to it. It is disturbing.

(*BRAND comes in.*)

PERIVALE (*commandingly*). Brand !

BRAND. Your Majesty !

PERIVALE (*smiling*). Thank you, Brand.

CAPTAIN (*coldly*). What is this, Brand ? This tale of the Ivory Door was a tale for children ? This is your King ?

BRAND (*awkwardly*). I—I—Your Excellency—I did but say "Your Majesty" without thinking. There is—Your Excellency sees for himself——

CHANCELLOR (*kindly*). I know, Brand. It has been on my tongue to say "Your Majesty" many times ;

yet we have proof that this is not the King, but an impostor.

BRAND. For the moment it was as if His Majesty was alive again. . . . (*Remorsefully*) I should have stopped him. I tried to, but he *would* go through.

CHANCELLOR. There is no blame with you, Brand.

CAPTAIN (*impatiently*). There is no talk of blame. Only tell us. You say, and you have known him well, that this is *not* the King?

PERIVALE (*to* CHANCELLOR). May I ask him? (*With a smile*) It seems to be my last chance.

CAPTAIN. Well, Brand?

CHANCELLOR (*to* PERIVALE). Ask him.

PERIVALE (*slowly and carefully*). Brand. I came this morning with you to the door. You carried the lantern. I bade you pull the curtains. You remember. You tried to stay me. You warned me that the others never came back; you told me that I was *King* Perivale. You remember. I pushed you away, and said mockingly that you should hide yourself, lest the devils jumped out at you. You remember.

(BRAND *nods at each incident.*)

BRAND (*intent on* PERIVALE). I hid—but watched you go.

CAPTAIN. You mean you watched the King go?

BRAND (*turning to him with a start*). I watched the King go.

PERIVALE. You watched me go. There was nothing there, Brand. A long passage under the ground—twists and turns here and there—a scratch, a stumble, no more—no danger—nothing. I came out by the stream that runs beneath the walls into the Forest. I rested. I climbed back to the Castle Gate. . . . Brand. Look at me well. Am I the King? These others have tales of me. Heroic tales. An' I were the King, I could do this and that. You know me too well, Brand.

Look at me. Tell me—for indeed I am beginning to doubt myself now—am I the King?

CAPTAIN (*ironically*). Is he the King? Come, Brand, tell us. The tales of the Ivory Door that have been handed down to us these many years, they were but tales to frighten children. Our good King Stephen, he is still alive. We have been afraid of a shadow. There is nothing here behind the door, nothing that we do not know. Our wisest men have been as fools. They have told us childish stories. There are no devils in the world—only children. Come, Brand!

CHANCELLOR (*anxiously*). Look, Brand, and tell us. Is it the King?

(BRAND approaches PERIVALE, and looks earnestly into his face. PERIVALE smiles back at him.)

BRAND gives an anxious, furtive glance at the others, looks at PERIVALE again, almost apologetically now, and drops his eyes.)

BRAND. It is not the King.

CHANCELLOR. You have known His Majesty for many years. Of all of us you have been the most intimate with him. You have seen this man and you say that it is not the King.

BRAND. It is not the King.

CAPTAIN. Ah!

PERIVALE (*sadly*). Oh, Brand! Is it indeed so?

BRAND (*muttering*). It is not the King.

[*He withdraws.*]

CAPTAIN. Is Your Excellency satisfied?

CHANCELLOR (*to PERIVALE*). And now what do you say?

PERIVALE (*sadly*). It seems that I am not the King.

CHANCELLOR. Then what are you? (*With dignity to the CAPTAIN who would interrupt*) No, no, I will ask.

PERIVALE (*with a shrug*). For you, what you think me. I can be no other.

CHANCELLOR. An evil spirit ?

PERIVALE (*with a smile*). A disembodied spirit.

CHANCELLOR. But you are not the King ?

PERIVALE. How can I be ?

CAPTAIN (*grimly*). At last ! You have said it !

(*He puts his hand to his sword. But before he can draw it there is an interruption. A growing tumult without announces the return of the PRINCESS.*)

VOICES. The Princess ! The Princess !

PERIVALE. Ah !

CHANCELLOR (*joyfully*). What is this ? Her Royal Highness returned to us ?

CAPTAIN (*returning his sword*). Let us hear what news she brings us. (*With a sneer to PERIVALE*) It seems that you and your kind had no power over her.

PERIVALE (*thoughtfully*). What is "my kind" ? I seem no nearer finding out.

(*The PRINCESS comes in, the Crowd at her heels.*)

SIMEON (*for the tenth time*). What did I say ? Wasn't I right ? Coming from afar as she did——

CHANCELLOR (*coming to her*). Your Royal Highness ! Is there—— Need I—— I have no words for my joy. Come !

(*He makes to conduct her to the throne, but she waits opposite PERIVALE, and stands looking at him with a smile. Then she gives him a little nod of comradeship.*)

PERIVALE (*with a little laugh*). Ah !

LILIA. Now I understand. (*She nods again.*)

PERIVALE (*smiling*). I wondered if you would understand.

CHANCELLOR. Come, Your Royal Highness ! (*He seats her on the throne.*)

A VOICE. What of His Majesty ?

CAPTAIN. Ay, what of His Majesty ?

CHANCELLOR. Your Royal Highness, have you news for us of His Majesty ?

LILIA. I have news, yes.

CAPTAIN (*eagerly*). You found his body ?

CHANCELLOR. Alive or dead, Your Royal Highness, alive or dead ?

VOICES. What news, what news ?

CAPTAIN. You have found his body, lady ?

LILIA. I have found the King.

CHANCELLOR. But alive or dead ?

CAPTAIN (*impatiently*). Dead, we know. You have found the King—where ?

LILIA (*nodding in the direction of PERIVALE*). There !

CAPTAIN. But——

CHANCELLOR. Do you——

(*The Crowd looks round for the KING.*)

VOICES. Where ? . . . What did she say ? . . . There's no King here.

CHANCELLOR. Do you mean——

LILIA (*going down to PERIVALE and taking his hand*). Here !

CHANCELLOR. But——

CAPTAIN (*bluntly*). He is an impostor, lady. We have proved it.

LILIA. I think he is the King.

VOICES. The King is dead !

LILIA (*smiling*). No !

VOICES. He went through the Ivory Door. . . . He's dead.

OLD BEPPO. What's she saying ? Did she find his body ?

CHANCELLOR (*distressed*). Your Royal Highness ! This is very—I find this very distressing. This man——

CAPTAIN. Man ? Devil more like.

OLD BEPPO. That's no mortal man. Don't I know ?

CHANCELLOR. Your Royal Highness, we have been making an examination in your absence. This—man or devil—I know not—but whatever he be, we have proved that he is not our King.

CAPTAIN. Enough ! He has admitted it.

VOICES. Kill him ! Kill him !

*(There is much enthusiasm.)*

SIMEON. Long live Queen Lilia !

*(There is much less enthusiasm. SIMEON, much confused, explains to his neighbour that all he meant, etc., etc.)*

CAPTAIN *(roaring)*. Silence there ! *(To LILIA)* Lady, he has admitted that he is not the King.

LILIA *(to PERIVALE wonderingly)*. Who are you then ?

PERIVALE. I am that Perivale who was betrothed to Lilia.

LILIA *(nodding)*. I thought so. *(To the others)* Yes, he is your King. If he denied it, it was because you would have it so.

VOICES. Who ? . . . What ? . . . What's she saying ?  
. . . The King's dead, isn't he ?

CAPTAIN *(impatiently)*. Enough of this ! We know——

CHANCELLOR *(with firmness and dignity, holding up a hand)*. Good people ! *(There is silence.)* We must preserve our courtesy towards this dear lady ; who has come to us, a stranger, betrothed to our King ; who left us so fearlessly in search of our King ; who has returned to us so miraculously in place of our King. . . . Your Royal Highness, there is no one of us who may not be mistaken. It seems to us that in this matter Your Royal Highness must be mistaken. We ask ourselves—if I may venture to put our thoughts into words—we say to ourselves : If this is indeed our

King, how comes it that the Princess Lilia did not recognise him two hours ago ?

LILIA. I was a stranger. Your King and I had never met until two hours ago.

*(There is a roar of laughter from the Crowd.)*

LILIA *(indignantly)*. It is true !

*(There is another shout of laughter.)*

PERIVALE. It can never be true now.

LILIA *(to him)*. Why do they not believe me ?

PERIVALE. They have their Legend—of this as of everything.

CHANCELLOR. Your Royal Highness—forgive them—but the truth is, they know. Your pretty secret was no secret to His Majesty's loving subjects. We——

CAPTAIN *(bluntly to LILIA)*. Then you did not find His Majesty's body ?

LILIA. I don't understand. There is nothing to find behind the door. There is nothing there, but a long and dusty road. *(They laugh at her again, but she goes on bravely.)* So then I knew that, if the King had gone through the door, he would have come out safely as I did, and that this was your King.

CHANCELLOR *(puzzled)*. Yet how can this be ? For we know—— *(He looks at PERIVALE, wondering.)*

*(There is silence for a little. Then slowly, in whispers at first, from the edge of the Crowd, the doubt begins to spread, from one to his neighbour, until someone voices it aloud, and all take up the cry—" Is it the Princess ? ")*

CAPTAIN. By the Ivory Door and all the Little Devils, you have said it ! *(To the CHANCELLOR.)* This is not the Princess !

PERIVALE *(with a loud laugh)*. Indeed a magic door !

*(He has taken LILIA's hand as the murmurs of the Crowd grew. She turns to him now in wonder.)*



LILIA. What does he mean ?

PERIVALE (*bitterly*). It strips us bare, that door. We bring nothing back.

LILIA (*with dignity*). We bring ourselves.

PERIVALE. But how little that is. (*With gentleness suddenly*.) You mustn't be frightened.

LILIA (*proudly*). Did you think I was ?

PERIVALE (*looking at her intently*). No, it is I who am frightened for you.

(*The CHANCELLOR has been trying to sort out this new idea. The Crowd discusses it. The CAPTAIN gives an order to CARLO, who goes out.*)

CHANCELLOR (*grappling with it*). But—but——

CAPTAIN (*coming back to him*). Why, man, it stands out as plain as a rock. The Princess Lilia came to us. She did not recognise this man because he was not the King. She goes through the door to her death, as everyone else has done. An evil spirit takes her place, passes itself off as the Princess, and hails her fellow-devil as the King. (*Triumphantly*) Why, did you not note how they whispered and plotted with each other as she came in ?

VOICES. Yes ! Yes ! They whispered to each other.

PERIVALE (*to himself*). What a delicate thing is Truth ! How easily it overbalances !

CHANCELLOR (*after thought*). It explains. It explains. I see no other way of it.

(*CARLO comes back with a cord in his hand.*)

CARLO (*to TITUS*). Did I not say this Princess of yours was the Devil's Brat ?

TITUS. But this is *not* the Princess !

CARLO (*sulkily*). Well, but she is the Devil's Brat, which is what I said.

CHANCELLOR. Yes, it explains.

CAPTAIN. Explains ! What else can it be ?

VOICES. Kill them ! Kill them both !

CHANCELLOR (*holding up his hand*). Nay, wait! We must be sure first.

CAPTAIN (*to CARLO*). Bind them together.

(*They are tied, her left wrist to his right.*)

PERIVALE (*to LILIA, as they are bound*). This was to be our marriage-day. Now we are indeed joined together.

LILIA (*bravely*). Till death?

PERIVALE. I do not know. There may be a way out.

CHANCELLOR (*to the people*). We must be sure first. But how can we be sure? In the case of the one—(*indicating PERIVALE*)—there were many who knew the King well, and could bear testimony, but in the case of the other, who can be certain?—for there were but a few minutes in which we saw the Princess Lilia. (*Bending forward and looking at her.*) Is it the Princess?

SIMEON. If I may be permitted, Excellency, the Princess was a thought taller.

VOICES. Yes, yes, she was much taller.

SIMEON. I remember saying—(*to his neighbour*)—did I not say?—Her Royal Highness is a tall lady. At least, I corrected myself, she is not short. Now this woman is short.

CAPTAIN. Much wickedness in a little body. Let us make an end of it.

CHANCELLOR. Stay! . . . Did any other notice Her Royal Highness in particular?

A VOICE. Her hair was darker.

CHANCELLOR (*doubtfully*). Was it?

VOICES. Much darker.

CHANCELLOR. H'm! (*But he is doubtful.*)

SIMEON. If I may be permitted, Excellency, there is a way.

CHANCELLOR. Well?

SIMEON. The portrait of Her Royal Highness which

the Princess Lilia presented to His Majesty. That would not lie.

PERIVALE (*with a loud mocking laugh*). True, that would not lie ! Is it not the work of the Court painter himself ?

CARLO (*shaking him roughly*). Wait till they speak to you.

VOICES. What did he say ?

CAPTAIN. Is Brand there ? . . . Fetch the picture. . . .

SIMEON. If she were to stand beneath the picture, Excellency——

CHANCELLOR. In good time, my friend. (*He looks suddenly at the door, and away again.*) We shall see to it that we know the truth. (*To the CAPTAIN*) Did you—— (*He looks at the door and shivers nervously.*)

CAPTAIN. What is it, Excellency ?

CHANCELLOR (*to himself*). The door—I thought for a moment—— But 'twas nothing.

VOICES. The picture !

(*BRAND comes in with it.*)

CHANCELLOR. Ah ! Now we shall see. Two of you——

CAPTAIN. Carlo, Titus ! Hold it up.

(*They hold it above LILIA'S head. So unlike her is it that the CROWD bursts into mocking laughter.*)

LILIA (*sadly*). She is more beautiful than I.

PERIVALE. I had not noticed it.

LILIA. Were you disappointed when you saw me ?

PERIVALE (*smiling*). With the picture, yes.

CHANCELLOR (*who has come down from the throne to look*). Yes, yes, we know the truth now.

CAPTAIN (*hand to dagger*). Of course we know. And now that we know ?

VOICES. Kill them ! Kill them !

CHANCELLOR (*holding up a hand*). We must—we must consider—I—— (*He wheels round suddenly, pointing to the Door.*) There ! Did you not see it ?

CAPTAIN. See what ?

CHANCELLOR. The Door !

VOICES. The Door ! The Door ! Look at the Door !

CAPTAIN (*bravely*). What of the Door ?

CHANCELLOR. I thought for a moment—— Is it locked ? Who has the key ?

CAPTAIN. Ay, it is locked. (*Doubtfully.*) I—I suppose it is locked. Carlo—see if it be locked.

CARLO (*protestingly*). Captain !

CAPTAIN (*fiercely*). What ! You would——

CARLO (*hastily, moving one step nearer*). It is locked, Captain.

CAPTAIN. It is locked, Excellency.

CHANCELLOR. Ah ! I thought—it seemed for a moment—but you say it is locked. Who has the key ?

(*The CAPTAIN looks at him, puzzled.*)

OLD BEPPO. What do they say ?

SIMEON. The Door. His Excellency thought that it was opening.

(*There is a shriek from a woman in the Crowd.*)

ANTON. It did open. I saw it. Opened and then shut again.

VOICES. The Door is opening ! . . . They are coming for us. . . . They have come for their friends ! . . . Save yourselves !

(*There is a rush to escape.*)

CAPTAIN (*roaring*). Hold there, fools ! (*Contemptuously*) Well, let them go.

(*Only himself, the CHANCELLOR, BRAND, and the two PRISONERS, with CARLO and TITUS remain.*)

CHANCELLOR (*nervously*). I—I was asking : Who has the key ?

TITUS (*producing it*). I have it, Excellency. Her Royal—the woman had it. I took it from her when we bound them together.

CHANCELLOR. Give it to me. (*He takes it.*)

CAPTAIN (*in a loud cheerful voice*). Well, how shall it be? Hanging, stoning, burning—how does one kill devils?

(*LILIA clings to PERIVALE.*)

PERIVALE (*in a loud whisper*). Fear not! Look where the Door opens again! They are coming for us!

(*The CHANCELLOR turns round with a nervous start.*)

CHANCELLOR (*testily to CAPTAIN*). You hear? You see what happens? This talk of yours, so loud, so boastful—I will not have it! You think only of the moment; you leave it to me to think of the future. It is not a question of killing this or that evil spirit, but of closing up the Door by which they come into our world.

CAPTAIN (*sulkily*). The Door is closed.

CHANCELLOR (*in a sudden burst of irritation*). Was there ever anything so foolish as a soldier's mind? I speak not of this door or that door, but of the fact that the barrier between our world and theirs is down. It is our task to rebuild that barrier. Kill! Kill! That is a soldier's only remedy. One rebuilds nothing by killing.

CAPTAIN (*with a sneer*). Your Excellency is frightened.

CHANCELLOR. I *am* frightened, and I am not afraid to say so; and you are frightened, and you *are* afraid to say so. That is all that there is between us. But I will not talk of these things here. (*He looks nervously at the Door again.*) It is unwise, it is unsafe. I will not stay here and talk openly of these things. (*He moves towards an inner apartment.*) Let us discuss these things secretly and soberly. Come with me!

CAPTAIN (*sulkily*). Well, have it your own way. (*To CARLO and TITUS*) Wait here with the prisoners.

CARLO (*protesting*). Captain! (*He looks fearfully at the Door.*)

CAPTAIN (*in a fury*). By all the Devils behind the Door, can I not even command my own soldiers!

BRAND (*to CAPTAIN*). You can command them, Captain, but what good are they to you, if they run away at the first alarm? (*With a contemptuous jerk of the head at the PRISONERS*) I will look after these. I am not afraid. (*Taking out his dagger.*) If their friends come for them, they come for their dead bodies.

CAPTAIN (*clapping BRAND on the back*). There's a brave boy! (*Contemptuously to the other two*) Guard the outer door if you have that much courage, and see that none comes in.

CARLO (*sheepishly*). Yes, Captain.

[*He and TITUS go out.*]

CHANCELLOR. They are in your safe keeping, Brand? (*Anxiously*) You understand, we have not yet decided——

BRAND. I understand, Excellency.

CHANCELLOR (*to CAPTAIN*). Then come! (*With a last glance at the Door*) Come!

CAPTAIN (*with a swagger, to show his courage*). I come!

(*They go out. BRAND sees them go, and comes quickly back to PERIVALE, and drops on one knee.*)

BRAND. Your Majesty, forgive me!

PERIVALE. Why, Brand, how is this? I made sure I was an impostor. (*He holds out his hand and lifts BRAND up.*)

BRAND. It was I who was the impostor, Your Majesty.

PERIVALE (*to LILIA*). My servant who did not know me at first.

BRAND. I knew Your Majesty. How could I not know you, who have been so close to you?

PERIVALE. Yet you denied me.

BRAND. Your Majesty, what help would it have been if I had acknowledged you? Would they have believed me? They would have tied me up with you as one in

the plot. How should they believe me, when they did not want to believe?

PERIVALE. You are right, Brand. They did not want to believe.

LILIA (*surprised*). Do they want to lose their King?

PERIVALE. No. . . . But rather him than their Legend. This story of the Ivory Door, we have lived with it, it has been part of our life, for how many hundreds of years? But I have been King for three years only. When I came safely through the Door, I was telling each one of my people that he was a fool and a coward. A fool to believe, a coward to fear. Could I expect them to cry to the world: "We are fools and cowards! Long live His Majesty who has proved it to us!"

BRAND (*to LILIA*). We have been proud of our Legend, Your Royal Highness. It is our own; something which joins us together. We talk of it often. We tell each other stories. We could not lose it.

LILIA (*with a smile*). Your Chancellor seemed as if he would be glad to lose it.

PERIVALE. Not the Legend; only the reality. . . . Well, Brand? What now?

BRAND (*quickly*). Your Majesty, I knew that some way would come, if I waited. I think it is come now. You see how it is with His Excellency. He is afraid of doing anything to you, afraid of doing nothing. I will go in to him presently, and tell him that I heard evil spirits whispering behind the Door of what they would do if harm came to you. He will be glad to let you go.

LILIA. Back through the Door?

BRAND. Yes, lady. I do not know—it is a new life—you will not be King and Queen again. But it will be life. I can do no more.

LILIA (*with a sigh of happiness*). Is there anything more than—just life?



PERIVALE. Come with us, Brand.

BRAND. As Your Majesty's servant ?

PERIVALE. As our friend.

BRAND (*shaking his head*). I like myself better as a servant, Your Majesty. And I have a fondness for Kings. You spoke of a cousin. I will seek him out.

PERIVALE. As you will.

BRAND. Here ! Take this ! (*He gives him a dagger.*) That is always a friend. Now I go with a tale to the Chancellor. Courage, lady. In a little while.

[*He hurries out, calling " Excellency ! Your Excellency ! " in tones of horror.*]

PERIVALE. Let us use our friend while we can. (*He cuts the cord that binds them*) It has hurt you ? (*He looks at her wrist.*)

LILIA. I have not minded it.

PERIVALE (*picking up the cord*). Perhaps I should not have cut it. It was our wedding-ring.

LILIA. Are we wedded ?

PERIVALE. I am not sure. At one time there was talk of my marrying the Princess Lilia. The Princess Lilia is a cold, proud, beautiful lady. She would have made a cold, proud, beautiful Queen. As I am no longer a King, I feel that I should give her the opportunity to withdraw, if she wishes it.

LILIA. She wishes it—and withdraws.

PERIVALE. I thought she would. . . . That leaves me free to seek marriage elsewhere.

LILIA. Have you chosen the lady whom you will now honour ?

PERIVALE. I have no choice in the matter. Reasons of state demand that my dynasty be joined to hers. I have a dagger and a suit of clothes, and she has a suit of clothes. For the sake of these great possessions it is necessary that we wed.

LILIA. I do not like these state marriages.

PERIVALE (*gently*). We could throw away the dagger and make it a love match if you were willing.

LILIA. I do not know much about love matches.

PERIVALE. I asked my father once, when I was a little boy, if you had to love people *tremendously* before you married them. He said, "Yes, you should". I think he was right, don't you?

LILIA (*shyly*). I don't think I know what "tremendously" means.

PERIVALE. It means many things; but chiefly, I think, it means that in all your thoughts and in all your acts, in every hope and in every fear, when you soar to the skies and when you fall to the earth—always—you are holding the other person's hand. (*He takes hers.*)

LILIA (*wistfully*). It is a lovely thing for it to mean.

PERIVALE. I found that out when they tied my hand to yours, and we stood there waiting. I kept saying to myself, "To think that I might never have known about this!"

LILIA. It helped me to hold your hand. I *was* frightened, you know.

PERIVALE. You were so brave that only I knew.

LILIA. You will hold my hand if we are to go through the Door together?

PERIVALE. Yes.

LILIA. I am a little frightened still.

PERIVALE. There is nothing to fear. It is Life, not Death, which waits behind the Door for us.

LILIA. But I am a little frightened—of Life.

A VOICE (*from outside, nervously*). Are you there?

PERIVALE. We are here, Your Excellency.

(*A hand comes through the curtain holding the key.*)

THE CHANCELLOR'S VOICE. We do not want you here. Alive or dead we do not want you.

PERIVALE. We will go. (*He takes the key.*)

THE CHANCELLOR'S VOICE (*anxiously*). You will tell them that we did you no harm?

PERIVALE. I can bear witness that you did us no harm.

(*The CHANCELLOR is heard no more. PERIVALE, key in hand, goes to the Door, and stands there for a moment, looking at LILIA.*)

LILIA (*wonderingly*). It is a strange Door. Last time we went through as King and Queen and we came out as man and woman. This time we go through as man and woman, and we come out—how?

PERIVALE. Perhaps as lovers, for that is again to be King and Queen.

LILIA (*looking at him gravely*). It may be so. I would be glad to let it be.

(*PERIVALE goes to the Door and opens it. Then he comes back to her.*)

PERIVALE (*holding out his hand*). Come! Let us be part of the Legend!

\* \* \* \* \*

(*And of them we shall see no more. Darkness falls on them, and they are gone. But we have one glimpse into the future. We do not see much; no more, indeed, than a vignette of an old head and a young head; but we know that once more Youth is asking eagerly, and Middle Age gravely telling the truth about things.*)

THE PRINCE. And was King Stephen the last to go through the Door, Father?

THE KING. No, my son, there was King Perivale. He went through the Ivory Door on the morning of his marriage, and was never seen again; and after much fighting his cousin came to the throne. That cousin was my grandfather.

THE PRINCE (*eagerly*). Tell me about it !

THE KING. He was a very brave man, King Perivale. None was ever greater in courage and strength and wisdom. He was to be married to the Princess Lilia, the most beautiful woman who ever lived, and on the very day on which she was to be Queen, it chanced that she found the key of the Door. And being a stranger to our country, and not knowing of the terrible things hid behind the Door, she opened it and passed through. The King's servant saw her and gave the alarm, but none dared to follow her, save only the King. As soon as the news came to Perivale, he drew his sword and rushed after her, knowing that he was to die, yet content to die with the lady whom he loved. The Door closed behind him . . . and neither of them was ever seen again.

THE PRINCE. What *does* happen to them, Father ?

THE KING. Nobody knows, my son. Some say that there is a bottomless pit into which they fall—(*the curtain begins to drop*)—some say that the Devil himself lies in wait for them—but this only is certain, that, of all those who venture through the Door, none ever comes back. . . .

(*And so the Legend goes on.*)

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